

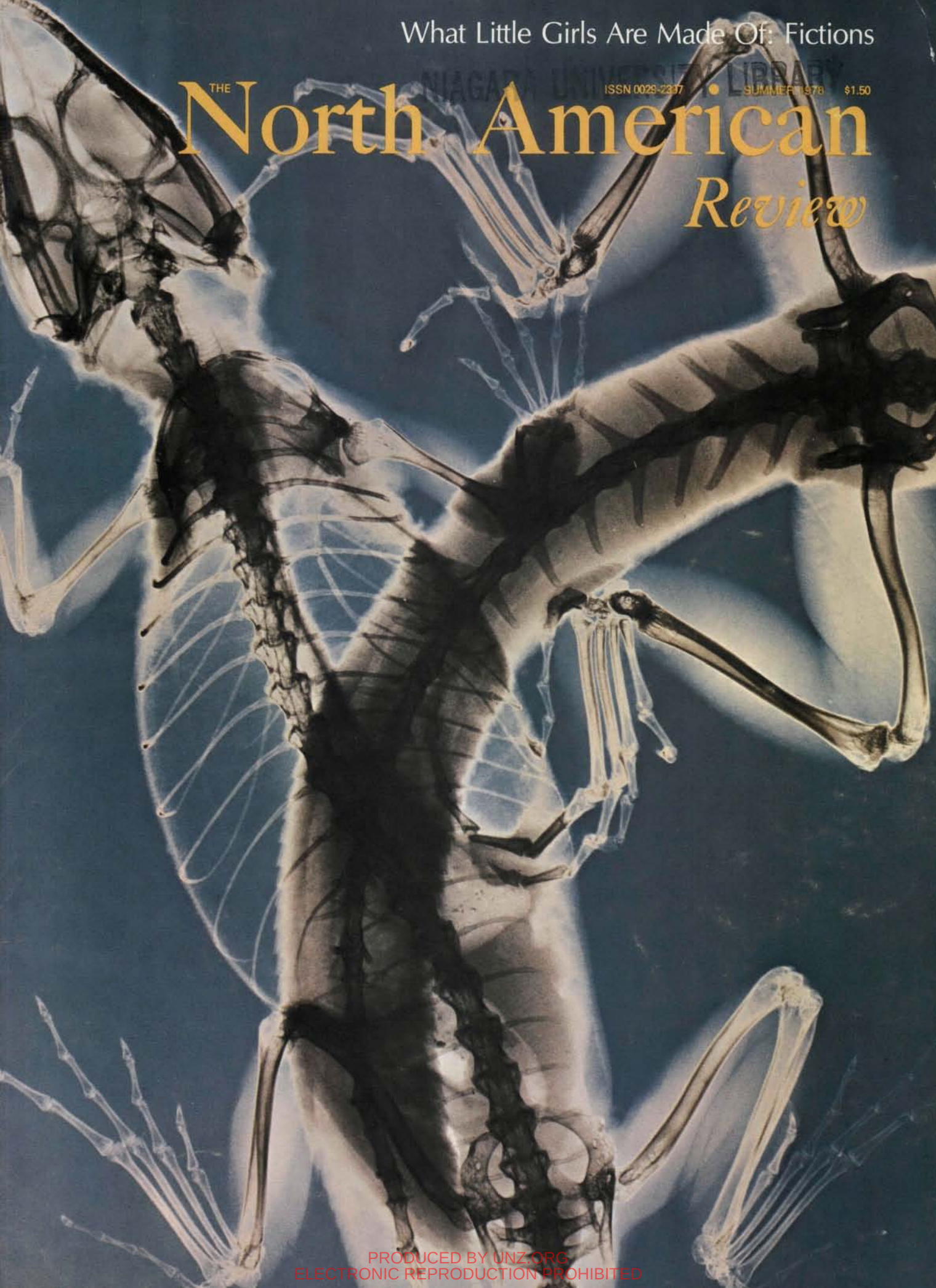
What Little Girls Are Made Of: Fictions

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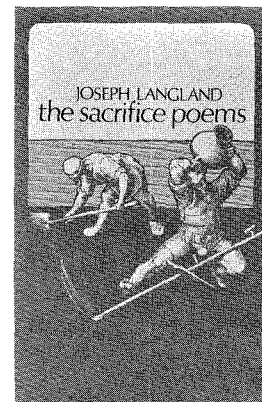


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Lani Silver, Katie Kain, Elyse Eisenberg, & Shelley Fern

Endorsing Psychosurgery

Psychosurgery, more commonly known as "lobotomy" has recently been at the forefront of Congressional medical activity, and may soon be federally endorsed as "therapeutic treatment."

The Congressional activities began in 1974 with the creation of the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. At that time the Commission was to identify the ethical principles underlying the use of humans as experiments for research, and was then to submit a set of recommendations concerning each particular area of investigation to the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. The Commission studied five areas. The third of these, psychosurgery, has been recommended as "therapeutic treatment" for mental "disorders"; thus it has now been removed from the list of experimental procedures.

Why and how was the Commission established? And what had been going on in this field prior to 1974? Walter Freeman, former professor of neurology at the George Washington School of Medicine, has estimated that approximately 50,000 people underwent psychosurgery in its first wave during the '50s. Today between 500 and 1000 operations are performed each year, according to Dr. Peter Breggin, a Washington, D.C., psychiatrist. Breggin had campaigned hard for the establishment of a commission to investigate psychosurgery when he researched and publicly revealed the extent to which psychosurgery was being performed by surgeons across the nation, even though most people believed it to be a dead issue after the '50s.

Breggin reports that the target populations for psychosurgery have changed since the '50s, that present target groups are private patients, rather than people in prisons—persons "who are relatively well-func-

tioning, the large majority of them being women, with old people and children as other large groups."

According to Breggin, these are middle-aged and middle class women diagnosed as "neurotic." Such women, suffering from anxiety and depression at the loss of family and career opportunities, constitute the majority of psychosurgery patients in America. "While the operation may sometimes relieve the symptoms of anxiety or depression" he has said, "it also leaves the patient with permanent brain damage and loss of intellect, memory, and motivation."

Critics of psychosurgery agree that women are the largest patient population, as if there were an increasing attitude that women should be seen and not heard. On the other hand, Freeman argues that lobotomized women make great housewives. "On the whole, psychosurgery reduces the creativity, sometimes to the vanishing point." He adds that businessmen can return to work: "Although they may not become leaders in their professions, they serve adequately and comfortably."

But if psychosurgery is used to treat "disturbed" members of society, then who are they? and how did psychosurgery come to be considered a treatment?

Brain Violence

In 1967, Drs. Frank Ervin, Vernon Mark, and William Sweet, of Massachusetts General Hospital, wrote a group letter to the *Journal of the American Medical Association* linking violence and the brain. The three suggested that "arson, sniping and physical assault" were related to some type of brain dysfunction. Dr. Orlando Andy of the University of Mississippi agreed with their thesis, saying, "I think that those who are involved in any uprisings such as Watts or Detroit could have abnormal brains. Those people should undergo

tests with whatever capacity we now have."

The doctors called for further investigation, and a screening system, to determine who the violent people were, and how to treat them.

Dr. M. Hunter Brown, a Santa Monica psychosurgeon, was among those who proposed psychosurgery: "Each violent young criminal incarcerated from 20 years to life costs the taxpayers perhaps \$100,000. For roughly \$6,000 society can provide medical treatment (psychosurgery) which will transform him into a responsible, well-adjusted citizen."

Ervin further articulated his ideas: "We're not talking about being nicer to people. I make no argument at all. I found out 30 years ago that it didn't sell anybody. We're really talking about being socially cost effective. If you can work out a way to define, diagnose, treat, and even prevent a problem, you're going to save a lot of money."

Breggin is opposed to brain surgery in exchange for the taxpayers' money: "There are only two things you can do with a human brain: you can leave it alone, or you can harm it."

Ervin, Mark, and Sweet have suggested that ten to twenty million people might have brain damage which makes them violent. In Ervin and Mark's book, *Violence and the Brain* they say: "Violence is a public health problem." They offer psychosurgery as the solution.

To set up a center where they could implement their ideas, Ervin requested financing directly from Congress, following publication of the letter in the *AMA Journal*. From the National Institute of Mental Health, the three doctors received \$500,000, and from the Justice Department they received several hundred thousand dollars more. The Justice Department requested that research be done on violent personality

types, specifying genetic factors. NIMH named amygdalotomy, a type of lobotomy, as the therapy to be researched.

Meanwhile, Dr. Louis West, Director of the Department of Psychiatry and the Institute of Neuropsychiatry at UCLA, was working on a plan for a center to be started there. West, a colleague of Dr. Sweet, was interested in heading a center in Los Angeles to develop a process whereby violence-prone individuals could be discovered. He also wanted a mass screening test to be developed.

It was Sweet who requested money when the time came for funding to be renewed. He also asked for funding for West's UCLA project. But the group was being criticized by the Justice Department. An internal memo stated: "Financial problems with the grantee have included an attempt to purchase non-competitively equipment from a firm whose major stockholder was Dr. Ervin and the payment of \$250.00 per day to a consultant without prior approval for such consultation fees. While none of the financial manipulations mentioned above are dishonest, they appear to demonstrate an attempt to use government funds to the advantage of the grantee, rather than with any feeling for the advantage of the public."

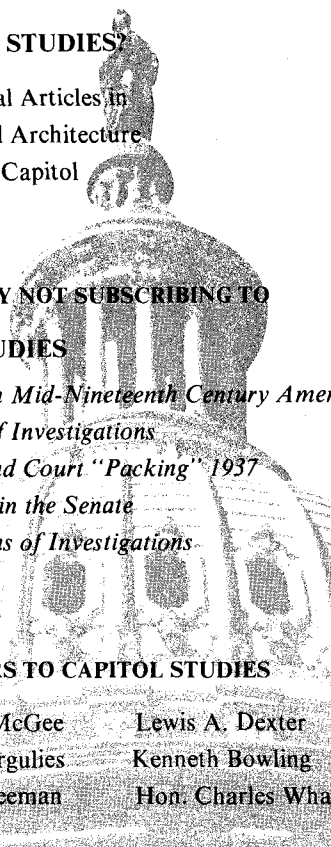
The group was also being sued by several relatives of patients who had undergone psychosurgery. The lawsuits claimed that the patients were left as near vegetables.

Finally the NIMH withdrew their money, and requested that no psychosurgery be performed after the cutoff date in 1971.

UCLA

Nevertheless, in 1973 Ronald Reagan gave his official blessing to psychosurgery when he announced that the Center for the Study and Reduction of Violence was a new project at UCLA, with Jolyn West at its head. And, in fact, the center was set up to define violent personality types in society.

To accomplish this, 29 projects were organized to study violence in the individual. Each project's premise was "that violence proceeds from an organic derangement of the individual, that this derangement can be perceived in advance of the commission of a violent act, and preventative measures can be taken."



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Who were some of the subjects? The rioter, the murderer, and the menstruating woman. (It was suggested that women are more prone to be violent just prior to and during their menstrual cycle.)

UCLA also had plans to work closely with prisoners, mental patients, poor and third world people, and women. Plans were made to work with two Los Angeles junior high schools—one in a Chicano neighborhood, and the other in a black neighborhood. Permission had not been asked of the schools.

Dr. Alvin Poussaint, a black professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School talked about the center: "The study is racist. It assumes that

the black people are genetically damaged—that they're so animal and savage that whites have to carve on their brains to make them into human beings. . . ." And Dr. John Seely, the Center's Ethics Professor in Residence who later quit the project for its "unethical practices," says the UCLA project couldn't possibly benefit "any part" of the population of California. One-third of all the research projects suggested for the center involved surgical implants of electrodes into the brains of individuals to discover if brain waves revealed violence-prone individuals.

As public protest increased concerning the UCLA center and other federally sponsored programs, gov-

ernment money was withdrawn and the projects closed.

Psychosurgery Continues

Yet, privately, psychosurgery has continued since 1973, which brings us back to Breggin's research and the establishment of a national commission to investigate psychosurgeons.

What research did the Commission do? Why did they recommend psychosurgery as therapy given the controversial history of this type of brain surgery?

As members of Congress became concerned about issues of social control and the protection of human beings, the Commission was established. The Congressional concerns were best voiced by Senator Sam Ervin when he warned that Americans, particularly those in institutions, might have their liberties violated by the attitude that psychosurgery is "treatment" for mental disorders. He openly stated that psychosurgery "affects the ability of the individual to think for himself. The behavioral technology being developed in the U.S. touches upon the basic, most basic sources of individuality, and the very core of personal freedom." Ervin was concerned that the government was heavily involved in a variety of modification programs ranging from "simple reinforcement techniques to psychosurgery."

The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research was to "study the use of psychosurgery in the U.S. during the 5 year period ending Dec. 31, 1972." Soon after the mandate was published, the Commission was asked to extend the period to 10 years. They were also to establish recommendations on the use and "protection" of mental patients, prisoners, fetuses, and children. The established recommendations were then to be turned over to the Secretary of HEW and, if approved by him, would become national policy.

The Commission's published results of the research they did revealed that they had chosen a mere 61 patients to represent the patients of the specified 10 year period—in a country where it is known that at least 500 of these procedures are performed annually.

Allan Mirsky and Maressa Orzack, neuropsychologists at Boston

University, were selected to head a team to study psychosurgical patients. Together they studied 27 patients, and used Hans-Lukas Teuber's study of 34 patients to make up the total 61. At least 34 of the patients were studied within 4-18 months after surgery, so that long term results were not available on more than half of the patients examined.

The Commission also contracted with Eliot Valenstein, Professor of Psychology at the University of Michigan, to perform a literature survey to ascertain the nature of psychosurgery in recent years.

Whitewashing

Valenstein reported to the commission that only 27% of the neurosurgeons performing psychosurgery publish their work. He further noted that these published reports were of "limited usefulness" and found disagreement among professionals as to the effectiveness of psychosurgery. The Commission, however, overrode Valenstein's misgivings and based their recommendations on his findings and the scant review of psychosurgical patients.

Dr. Isadore Zifferstein, a Los Angeles psychiatrist, voiced his concerns over the approach that the commission took in making its study of a 10 year period. He suggested that most articles written on psychosurgery were of "lower scientific quality" because of "inadequate objective testing," and Dr. John Seely charged that the Commission's study was an unscientific one, with no basis for approving the use of psychosurgery. "We don't know that much about the brain to make that kind of entry [surgery] safe, and we don't know that much about any particular person. It's morally abhorrent to take that kind of risk without having done the underlying scientific work on animals first, and that's a good decade away," he said.

Lee Coleman says the Commission guidelines, in effect, "label the practice as essentially a therapeutic procedure and declare that review boards would be sufficient to prevent abuse of individuals." He explains: "There is absolutely no reason to believe that it is therapeutic. It is experimental and in fact it's one of the sloppiest forms of experimentation going on at this time."

The Commission's recommendations support the notion that vio-

lence, anxiety, depression, anger, and other emotions can be located in the brain, and that by destroying or removing parts of the brain, the 'disorders' can be 'treated' and 'cured'.

Breggin, though an initial supporter of the Commission, has called the Commission's guidelines "a giant step backward, a white-wash of psychosurgery" in response to the criticism that has been made.

Recommendations

The Commission's first recommendation requires that the psychosurgical procedure be done at an institution with an institutional review board specifically qualified for psychosurgery, that the surgeon be competent in performing the procedures in psychosurgery and that pre- and post-operative evaluations be done.

The Commission has claimed that "fairness requires that individuals should not be denied access to potentially beneficial therapy," thus implying justification of the use of this type of brain surgery.

The Commission also recommended that children, prisoners, and mental patients in mental institutions may have psychosurgery performed if a national psychosurgery advisory board has determined a specific procedure to be of "demonstrable benefit" for a psychiatric symptom; the patient or legal guardian gives informed consent; a court approves the operation; and there is an institutional review board (IRB) to determine the competence of the surgeon and the appropriateness of the operation.

According to Commission members, the recommendations set up protections and strict guidelines, through institutional review boards for the use of psychosurgery. It is the feeling of the commissioners that these boards will guarantee patient rights, check the competency of the surgeon, and assure that patients are sufficiently well instructed to give "informed" consent.

"It is extremely doubtful if the real risks can be made clear to a person who is thought to be in desperate need of such an operation. How can you make vivid what it would be like to be free of whatever it is that's bothering you and in another way irreversibly unable to do whatever it is? You're a prisoner of an irreversible process which you've consented to," according to Seely.

Dr. Brown, a key advocate of psychosurgery for the commission and a psychosurgeon himself says: "The risks of surgical treatment are told to the patient if he does not specifically object to this information. You will recall that the courts have determined a patient is not required to be belabored with a recital of risks that are unlikely or against his wishes. Indeed, it is inhuman to frighten a disturbed patient to death." Later he said, "I have suggested to the Council on Criminal Justice that we not clutter up the courts with consent all the time; that we perhaps appoint an ombudsman of unquestionable integrity."

Other critics claim that these guidelines ignore the fact that the people on the review boards are likely to be psychosurgeons themselves and are already predisposed to the treatment.

Conclusion

There are over 200 active psychosurgeons in the country today. The procedures they perform vary in name only; whether it is called prefrontal lesion, ultrasound surgery, cingulotomy or orbital undercutting, the effect is the same. Psychosurgery is brain surgery that involves cutting, either by blade or laser, or the implantation of electrodes in the brain—done with the explicit purpose of destroying selected brain fibers believed to be connected with the centers of anxiety, depression or other mental "disorders."

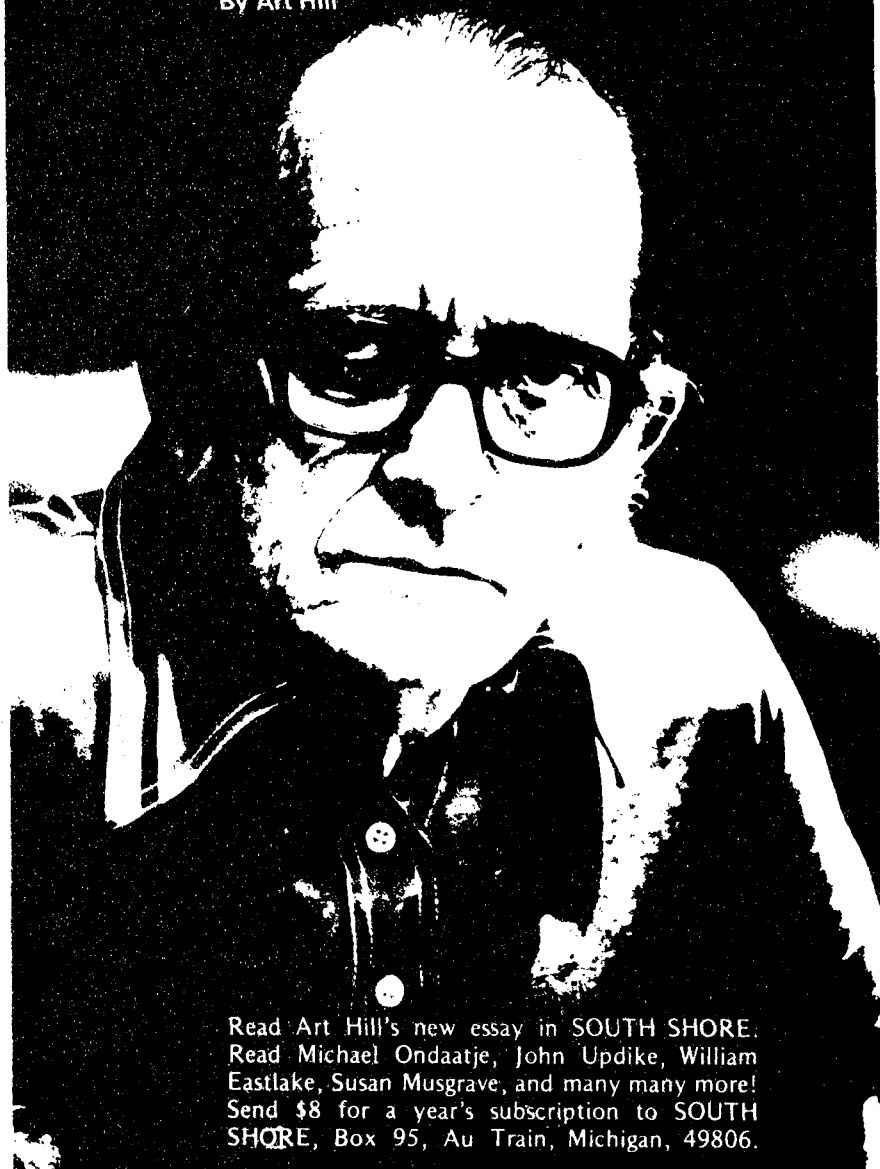
With the approval of the commission's recommendations, psychosurgery will be deemed therapeutic treatment, and psychosurgeons will be given the go-ahead to continue experimenting with this procedure.

Though many neurosurgeons have agreed that psychosurgery is a dangerous operation (Dr. Ernest Bates, a San Francisco neurosurgeon said, "It's absolutely true—we know so little about the brain") the Commission's recommendations were made, and are in conflict with these considerations.

Whether psychosurgery will be federally endorsed as a means of social control (or, as a cure or therapy for social anxieties), is up to the public through its pressures on the Secretary of HEW—assuming the public is even aware of, or interested in, this highly controversial medical practice.

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Kenneth Lash

Our High-Flung Correspondent

When I was told about it by phone I wasn't going to go. All that flying around for a two-hour party. But then the invitation arrived. "The President and Mrs. Carter request the pleasure of your company" The return address on the handwritten envelope was engraved in gold. It said simply, *The White House*. It was irresistible.

The power was in the invitation itself, not in any visions it conjured up. The occasion was a reception. I don't like receptions. I'm a celebrity-avoider. I'm no longer stirred even to curiosity let alone enthusiasm by elaborate social events. Fine feathers and foul dullness.

There were three smaller engraved cards in the envelope along with the invitation, one stating the reason of the occasion, another requesting a response to the White House social secretary, and the third a pass (nontransferable) for entrance at the southwest gate of the White House. The four cards lay in my lap. They didn't glow, they didn't yank, they just quietly pulled. I don't know how long I looked at them before I realized I was going to go. A couple of minutes, maybe. And it's not so curious, I suppose, but when I put the cards back in the envelope I began to think I might not go after all. But then I took them out again. "The President and Mrs. Carter request the pleasure of your company"

As the myths insist, the way to the sacred places is fraught with dangers and discomforts. In this case it began with those dark presences Ozark and O'Hare, deformed sons of Modred. Sir Valium may help you past them. In his absence my stratagem is to curl into a very tight ball. Nothing identifying you as human must be allowed to show. In this guise you may roll past them, since the way is all downhill.

Washing Town was crowded. It is the month of the pilgrim. Cherry

blossoms, tulips, flowering crabapples, the winter gone and the great heat of summer not yet here. Hotel rooms within miles of the center were not to be found. Not by me, anyway. So I called a government person, not high up but possessed of a formula, or so I supposed. Little did I reckon. She phoned back to say a room was arranged for my use at the Washington Hilton.

The Washington Hilton is enormous. It is complex, overpowering, honey-combed with restaurants,



lounges, swimming pools, shops, long curving corridors. It is semi-circular with two curving approaches and in back, behind the semicircle, are tennis courts, a huge swimming pool, an outdoor cafe. My room, I was told (after ten minutes of combined clerk-computer search) was in the "cabana" section. It was to cost \$48 a night plus tax.

A bellperson (Guidance Engineer?) took me on a long walk toward my room. "This is the cabana section," he said. I heard a note of respect. Looking out the curving windows I saw the reason for the name. We were on the ground floor, looking out on the pool and tennis courts. "This part's just been redone," he said, opening the door and standing back with a flourish to let me

enter. And why not? There should have been a blast of trumpets.

What I walked into was a thirty-foot-long room. Floor to ceiling glass wall, with a door onto a patio. A king-size bed was unobtrusive against the back wall. At the opposite end of the room was a handsome couch. Diagonally against the glass wall on the right were two large overstuffed armchairs. Back along the wall from them was a curved walnut desk, shaped like a modernistic underpass. To the left was a separate bar and serving room complete with refrigerator, sink, counter, cabinets. There was no plastic. The wooden furniture was British campaign-style, probably teak. A long table in front of the couch, two smaller tables, a five-foot wardrobe with brass fittings. There were two large closets, and a dressing room off the bath.

I had tipped the bellperson (lavishly, of course) and was standing in the middle of the room saying O boy! I'm a craftsman, enthused by quality and comfortable with luxury. I wanted to stay in that room a week. Then an awful thought struck me. Struck is the right word. I walked over to the door, where hotel regulations and rates are posted. The information, enclosed in glass, offered only one rate. It did not bother to specify number of occupants. It stated, simply, \$120.

I stood there for minutes on end trying to find excuses to pay it. What was I to do, go out onto the street, bag in hand? There were no rooms anywhere. I was going to the White House, dammit, should I stay at the YMCA? It was a once-in-a-lifetime occasion. What was? The White House visit? No, the damn great room. It is well to pay for once-in-a-lifetime things. It was my own money I was spending. I could cut down on candy bars. Still

I opened the door and walked back to the reservations desk. "Ex-

cuse me, did you say that the rate for my room was \$48? C-328.” She looked through a file of reservation cards, took one out, looked at it, asked for my name. “That’s correct,” she said, “\$48 plus tax.” I went back to my room, pulled the drapes (double) back along the glass wall, picked a long cigar out of my traveling case, lit it, sat down on the couch, spread my arms out along it, and puffed.

I had arrived at Camelot.

But I wasn’t inside. To get there, the following afternoon, I had to join a line that looked like a movie queue. I thought at first it was the line for a White House tour. It wasn’t, it was us, the folks for the reception, shuffling forward in those on again, off again movings of a clustered line. At the gates (very heavy, very thick iron) were guards in white gloves. They took our invitation cards, requested further identification, checked us off against the list, and then we were through, free to saunter up the curved drive. The great stretch of lawn sloping down toward a pool with fountains, encircled by flower beds, was impressive. The Washington Monument beyond served as exclamation point. For question, one of my fellow-guests said, “Is this where they roll the eggs?”

We walked past a small, rounded structure with a lovely garden in front, tulips two feet high, flowering trees. It was The Oval Office. There were more people in uniform with white gloves along the way. They were all in motion, alone except for one with a guard dog (German Shepherd). Their uniforms tended to be military blue, more yellow in it than police blue. Two of them stood at attention at the ground floor entrance to the White House. Curving stairs on each side led to the upper floor, iron railings festooned with lavender wisteria. One enters a circular reception room, one’s coat is taken. It’s very quiet. Carpets. Paintings. Bowls of flowers. Then on into the East Room, a large high rectangle of a room, figured ceilings, gilt, gleaming chandeliers. And a cast of hundreds.

“Who’s throwing this party, Cecil B. De Mille?” I asked of anyone around me.

“They’ve invited over fifty media people,” anyone answered.

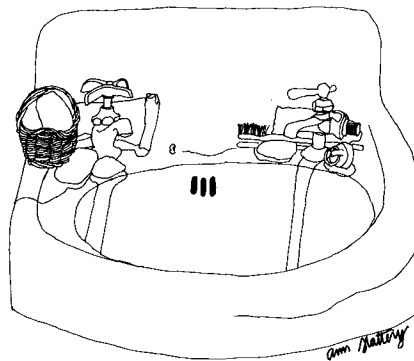
“Plus office personnel by the bunch,” anyone else added.

I realized that watching the entertainment swatches on TV that are

called news programs it never occurred to me that a massed platoon of people in ranks were aiming their cameras and microphones at the solitary scene. If you’re there, in a room, they overpower the scene, become the biggest element in it.

From afar I recognized the back of Jimmy Carter’s head. The backs of people’s heads are distinctive, touched with pathos. He began to talk, in that softly keening, not-so-slow-as-it-seems way of his. He was praising Rosalynn (pronounced, I found, Rose-a-lynn) and her Commission on Mental Health. (It was called the President’s Commission but he was clearly indicating it was hers.) He made a softly ironic little joke. “When I told Rosalynn back at the beginning that I wanted this Report within a year, she said it wasn’t much time considering the complexity of the task. I told her that if I could plan to get my energy program together and through Congress in six months then certainly she and her group could finish their work in a year.” He paused, not long enough for laughter. “Well . . .” he said, letting it stand there with Jack Benny timing. We laughed, fully. His talk was brief, serious (he understood the extent of the national health problem and would support any and all reasonable attempts at alleviating it), but essentially self-effacing. It was Rosalynn’s day, and he wasn’t going to take any of it away from her. They really like and respect each other. You could feel it, that liking between them.

Then Rosalynn spoke at some length, with a kind of down-home ease and fluency. She was impressive in responding to questions from the press. She was knowledgeable, she neither evaded nor answered in jargon, she did not go er and ah, she knew her stuff. An opening was provided (not by name) for her to speak out on the courage of Betty Ford. She



took it and spoke of the contribution such a difficult and public display of courage offered to people. She wasn’t witty, but she had a little light help when, in response to a question, she answered that Joe (Secretary Califano, standing near her) was looking into that matter, wasn’t he? “If I wasn’t, I am now,” he answered. Laughter. Flash bulbs. The room getting hotter and hotter as the body heat added, began to multiply. Senator Kennedy was there, with that curly head of hair, Irish-red complexion registering heat like a thermometer. He could go onto the side of an urn, if the Irish made urns. Aside from funerary ones, I mean.

The talk ended to sustained applause. The President disappeared. The media jumped off their platform and trampled through us on their way out. We filed into a marble-floored corridor where Rosalynn stood to shake our hands one by endless one, some two hundred of us. I slid off into a few of those charming rounded rooms that give the White House the sense of being a house as well as a governmental palace, small rooms full of flowers and fine delicate furniture and moldings and colors and small fireplaces and mediocre paintings.

In another large gilt-and-chandeliered room coffee and cookies were being served. Only one of the various cookies qualified as pastry—a macaroon with an apricot layer, very good, but the French Embassy has little to fear from the Carter White House. The room was jammed with voices, people balancing coffee cups. I found a window embrasure, backed into it snugly, and smiled, nodded, said a few words to Indians both native and not, a black woman from Los Angeles who talked about rain, a white doctor who asked about art, a Japanese woman who smiled and showed the obligatory teeth. I have active ears. They registered nothing but an undifferentiated hum. It was warm. I was sleeping with a coffee cup in my hand. Time to leave. I slid sideways around and between the humming groups, through a doorway, and found myself back in the receiving-line corridor, Rosalynn still there, the handshake line still there but dwindled. What the hell, I thought, and got into the line. A young trio was playing quiet, sophisticated jazz—east side New York cocktail lounge jazz. Bass, guitar,

piano. The piano was an elegant grand, long beautiful in-curve, light-grained wood decorated along the side with a panel of decorous ladies, almost Greek but probably American Federalist.

The night before, when my only pleasant shiver of anticipation had suddenly materialized, I decided to say something to Mrs. Carter, something she might remember. It would have to be quick and sharp, and therefore not too well-behaved. I had it. "Our behavior is our national health problem," I'd say. "Symptom

and cause. It's the poets who know most about it, not the doctors. Thank you for the lovely party." I wasn't thinking of that now, just watching the musicians make their sounds. Suddenly someone asked my name, passed it on to another, who in turn introduced me to Mrs. Carter. There she was, right in front of me, glassy-eyed with fatigue but patient.

"Lovely," I muttered to her. I hesitated, remembering I had wanted to say something. She was already turning toward the person behind me, but felt my hesitation and

turned back. "Uh, lovely," I said, and slunk off.

There were three drunken women on the late Ozark flight from Chicago. They'd gone to Florida to bowl. They yelled and sang and shouted all the wisecracks they'd learned from the men. When we landed at Waterloo the front door wouldn't open. We filed out of the back of the plane. It was dark and quiet out on the apron. The *E* had gone out in the lighted sign atop the flat airport building. WAT RLOO, it said. □

ROBERT WARD

THE SAN FRANCISCO ROWING CLUB

Joseph. Where are you? Ex-marine, homosexual.
At forty-eight still pumping iron to fan
Kelly's old heart. He loves you. Your pictures hang
in the bathroom;
1952 dream-boy Tarzan. In San Francisco those days
We visited the club, in view of Alcatraz, the structures
similar in decay.
Women wanted in now. *Dykes* you called them, not one attractive
in the whole pack. Though inside
The flaking skulls hung from the ceiling, the dancefloor
Rocked with dust when we spoke. In the one room

Above we found the limit of our muscles.
Schwarzenegger smiled from the wall in your lonely sanctum
of burning. *The more it hurts the better*
It feels. Outside the lockers of dead men
Filled a room. Only nine members remain. You hardly
see them; except yourself, rowing one-armed in the pitted
Mirrors, the white foam curling at your lips
Like milk. You would dead-lift past any face. Romanola
in the faded picture staring
Up from the jetty's water, greased like a watermelon
for the Bay's rip.
He walks on pins, and needles now, his heart a glass
Of Nitro. Only wood has found more ways to weather
And to rot. The first night returning home, my muscles
Like rubber, my stiffening flesh ecstatic
With exhaustion, I dreamt: an old gym,
Dilapidated like a subway tunnel. I paused before
It, undecided. Suddenly a little girl emerged
From the locker room, her face shining like a white flower.
I thought of you, and
Entered, smiling.

Vine Deloria Civilization and Isolation

Men can be provincial in time, as well as in place," Alfred North Whitehead once remarked. When we apply this insight to the realm of human knowledge, quite frequently we refer to the non-western peoples and point out that they have failed to keep pace with the technical developments that other peoples, particularly western peoples, have made. Thus non-western societies are considered by many social scientists as remnants of stages of human evolutionary growth struggling to reach levels of sophistication that were achieved and surpassed by Europeans many centuries ago. Rarely is the question of provinciality applied directly to western European peoples, and on those occasions we find that provinciality is applied as a criterion to determine efficiency and sophistication within the worldview of that tradition.

Provinciality, however, is a characteristic of societies and individuals who fail to conduct periodic critiques of their beliefs and who assume, with some degree of smugness, that the knowledge they possess, because it has been their possession for so long, provides the basis for intelligent existence in a world of sudden and unexpected change. Western Europeans have been so much dazzled by their own technology that they have fallen into a provinciality in regard to human knowledge so narrow as to exclude major portions of human experience. Whitehead called this attitude the "fallacy of misplaced concreteness," and he meant by this the exclusionary approach to the physical world coupled with the belief that whatever approach one did use properly excluded things that have no value.

When Native Americans have been forced to confront this attitude on the part of non-Indian neighbors we have generally come off second best. A good many factors must be included in any analysis of our failure to confront and overcome the attitude of superiority which non-Indians have thrust upon us. The most important factor would probably be the efficiency of technology which non-Indians brought with them. Marvelous instruments and tools of iron and other metals blinded us and produced an uncritical assumption that whatever the white man was doing must be based upon some superior insight into the world of nature. We forgot, to our detriment, that the first Europeans we encountered thought they were going to sail over the edge of the world, that succeeding expeditions had fantasies about Fountains of Youth, Cities of Gold, and northwest passages to Cathay.

Native Americans did not realize that Europeans felt a dreadful necessity to classify us within a view of the world already made obsolete by discovery of our continent. While we could not participate in the heated theological discussions concerning our origins—whether we derived from Noah's Ark or were survivors of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel—we perhaps could have been more insistent on making the non-Indians provide more and

better arguments for their version of world history and human knowledge. Any group that frantically dug gold in the west in order to transplant it to the east and bury it cannot be quite right and their insights cannot form the highest achievement of our species.

The world is much more sophisticated today, and groups of widely varying backgrounds can communicate with each other even though they form the minority of particular societies. Thus the modern emergence of Indian peoples and the concentration by them on revival and revitalization of culture should include a persistent emphasis on the validity of their own histories, technologies, and social and political institutions. In some measure Indian groups have already begun this process of defending and justifying cultural insights tribes have preserved over the centuries of contact with Europeans. Unfortunately, much of this activity has been phrased in an anti-white format which does not produce a justification of the Indian tradition but merely points out the inadequacies of the non-Indians. We do not take time to adapt this approach to the problem. One glance at the western democracies and we discover that the political leaders, when they are not lusting in their hearts after forbidden fruit, are demonstrating that intelligent life probably does not exist on the planet or, in the alternative, are planning ways to extinguish whatever intelligent life might accidentally arise here.

Transcending this childish tactic of accusatory relationship with the non-Indian is not difficult but it involves creating or re-creating a confidence in the Indian traditions. Such a task initially involves a determination of the techniques which Indians used to accumulate, evaluate, and perpetuate their knowledge of the world and to translate this knowledge into western terms that can speak rationally and intelligently to those people within the western cultural milieu who are prepared to listen. That is a lot of "lates," but above all it is not *too* late. So I will attempt to outline the variances which I see between the western European traditions and the Indian traditions, primarily the North American peoples, with the hopes that the differences—and there are radical differences to be seen—will be illustrated so clearly as to enable us to embark on a new interpretation of human knowledge which is not provincial in either time or space.

If I were to choose the single attribute that characterizes the western approach to human knowledge, indeed to almost all human activities, I would unhesitantly choose "isolation." In scientific and philosophical terms we are perhaps speaking of William of Occam and his famous razor which has cut the throat of more than one effort to synthesize human knowledge. Briefly, we can rephrase

this doctrine as the belief that by continual subdivision of any problem we can reach a certain and ultimate knowledge. For most of the last couple centuries the scientific concern with finding the tiniest element of the atom demonstrated the potency of this belief. It also, incidentally, illustrated the basic western belief in the primacy of matter over spirit. But isolation remains the dominating attitude which western peoples have adopted toward the world. We see this approach eloquently in our political institutions and the assumption that one human being is interchangeable with another and that the conglomerate of human decisions, counted statistically, produces the proper course of action for a nation to adopt. This belief reduces wisdom to public opinion polls and produces those nasty and distasteful compromises which substitute for intelligent activities in most of the western democracies.

We find additional confirmation of this belief in isolation in the various religious traditions that are characteristic of western peoples. Almost always, in the last analyses, we find the solitary individual in the hands of an angry, or at least disgruntled, god. Even those western peoples who have rejected the traditional religious denominations of their culture have not found another approach to the religious question but have simply adopted the Oriental version of solitude, listening to one hand clapping, and other symbolic gestures, and are now contentedly recycling their own energies endlessly. Even the atheists and humanists ground their justifications in the primacy of the individual rather than the maturity of the species.

One reason for the scientific and philosophical isolation of the elements of experience is the belief, deeply held although rarely practiced, that one cannot trust sense perceptions, human emotions, or the intuitional abilities of the human personality. This article of faith must certainly go as far back as the Greek philosophers and the prophetic movement in Israel, but was not a dominating factor in western existence until the relatively late period when Descartes, Leibnitz, and Newton demonstrated the efficiency of the mathematical descriptions of the physical world. Since that time western peoples have increasingly depended upon mathematics for their analyses and insights of nature. The approach has proven spectacular in the physical sciences, particularly physics, and the technology that has been produced as a by-product of physical theory has only served to entrench in western minds the belief that mathematics is the proper description of reality. So influential is this attitude that in the last century we have seen the development of social sciences which seem to suggest that statistical truth is equivalent to ultimate reality. The social sciences now insist that all human activities can be described as functions of complicated formulas. I have seen this attitude applied to elections in the United States, but I have generally rejected that approach and bet on the people who counted the votes rather than on those statistics which projected who would vote. Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago, now deceased, never failed me in this respect.

As mathematics has been more influential in representing the scientific quest, and as the scope of human knowledge has expanded, the old tendency toward isolation has produced a strange phenomenon in which human knowledge is divided into separate categories var-

iously called disciplines, fields of study, or what have you. As sciences have given rise to subgroupings of knowledge and specialties have been developed, knowledge itself has suffered a fragmentation and the sole guarantee of the validity of knowledge has been in the similarity of techniques employed to accumulate and interpret data. Briefly, even this field of methodology has degenerated as the various disciplines have moved away from each other, so that the sole criterion of truth today seems to lie in the sincerity of the researcher and his or her relative status within the specific field of endeavor. Sincerity is no guarantee of anything except an emotional state and quite often not much of a characterization even of that.

Isolation, in the oriental context, seems to be the isolation of emotions and personality, but in the western context can only be understood if seen in the context of the physical universe conceived as a giant machine that operates according to certain immutable laws. Conceiving physical reality as if it were a machine not only squeezes emotions and intuitions out of the data but introduces into the data the belief that the unusual cannot occur. Causality becomes the primary mode of interpreting data and eventually becomes the manner in which people describe a situation, so that even observations of events become incomplete and only the mechanical aspects of the happening are reported.

When this attitude emerges in the field of history its effect is to reduce the intensity of experience and homogenize human activities so that everything can be classified under the same categories of interpretation. History becomes at first a chronology and eventually a trivial commentary that has no criteria by which factors are described or understood. Most contemporary interpretations of world history are simply the imposition of uniformitarian principles on factual data that has been emptied of any human content. Ultimately, history becomes a collection of data of what we would like to believe about the world as dictated by the ideals we hold, rather than even an accurate chronology of what actually happened. We become helpless integers involved in a process over which we have no control and with respect to which we have little understanding.

Perhaps the final consequence of approaching the world with the intent to isolate and thereby achieve dominance over things is the belief that the way we see things is the proper manner of describing them. Thus we approach and reunite with the original contention that we are dealing with the fallacy of misplaced concreteness. But we have not engaged in a reasoning process as much as taken a tour around the intellectual and conceptual universe of the western European to illustrate the various modes that this basic error can take. A few illustrations may be in order, to demonstrate both the provinciality of the western attitude and the manner in which Indians and dissatisfied non-Indians can begin to move away from this mooring and expand the horizons of all concerned. The treatment of non-western peoples, particularly North American Indian peoples, provides a perfect setting in which we can examine the manner of escape.

The Europeans, arriving in North America, discovered a people that had no written language, laws, re-

ligions, or customs, yet governed themselves so well that the American constitutional fathers were encouraged by Benjamin Franklin to model themselves after the Iroquois League when they came to devise a constitution. Europeans, looking at Indian societies, decided that these people lived in savagery because they had no written rules and regulations to govern them. Here we find the intense desire to objectify, to render human activities to mechanical form, and to accord respect by discovering similarity and homogeneity. Finding a qualitative difference between Indians and themselves, the Europeans promptly characterized the North American peoples as a lawless breed devoid of the attributes of civilized society. A great many wrongs were done to Indians because non-Indians believed them to be without laws and therefore unable to make intelligent or just decisions regarding their lives.

All of these beliefs about Indians changed as social science became more influential in western society and more sophisticated in its observations. In 1926, with the publication of Malinowski's famous book, *Crime and Custom in Savage Society*, which demonstrated that customs could be as restrictive and socially integrating as written codes and laws, the perception of people made a radical shift and Indians were considered savages because they were so tightly bound by custom and lacked the freedom of western democratic peoples. How a whole race could shift in one century from most lawless to most law-bound remained a mystery to the Indians who came into contact with western intellectual history, but it should have been an indication to non-Indians that all was not well with the western way of perceiving human activities.

This example illustrates that much of what western peoples have understood as knowledge is simply a reorientation, within their own framework, of the thesis used to interpret phenomena, and is not a corresponding development in the phenomena itself. Even more, the example indicates that no final statement, and perhaps no reliable statement, can ever be made concerning knowledge of the world. There is always another viewpoint by which interpretations of data can be made and when this situation becomes entrenched in the academic worldview of a culture, inevitably the reality that it describes becomes a verbal or mental reality. When phenomena do not fulfill our expectations, they are disregarded, downgraded, or derided and the opportunity to come to grips with another facet of reality escapes us.

When we turn to the North American Indian worldview we discover an entirely different perspective on the world. Instead of isolating things, Indians encompassed them; togetherness, synthesis, and relatedness characterized their experiences of the universe. The ordinary distinctions between mind and matter, human and other life forms, nature and human beings, and even our species and the divinity were not considered valid ways of understanding experience. Life was a complex matrix of entities, emotions, revelations, and cooperative enterprises and any abstraction was considered stupid and dangerous, destructive of spirit and reductionist in the very aspects that made life important. A great many non-Indians have intuited this "togetherness" from observing Indians and reading of the "Indian way," but have failed to understand the remarkable system of relationships which undergirds a seemingly innocent and simple life.

Relatedness is a much better description of the Indian way of looking at the world. Here we are not describing a comparative knowledge in which no absolute value exists. Indeed, all values are absolute because they are experiences and because they deal with specific relationships between specific individuals. A good example of this specificity is the manner in which the Osage Indians fed themselves. In the early spring they would plant their corn along the bottomlands of the Missouri River about the place where St. Louis is today. After they had sown their crop they would depart for the far Rocky Mountains in Colorado and Wyoming to do their summer hunting. The Osage would spend most of the summer in the high mountains hunting deer, buffalo, antelope and other large game animals, and they would dry their meat in the sun, making it suitable for preservation.

In the middle of July they would begin to examine one of the mountain flowers and when this flower began to turn to seed they would know that it was time to begin their journey back to their winter homes. They would pack up their summer's hunting surplus and return to Missouri where their corn would now be ready for the harvest. Such behavior may seem the utmost of simplicity except that to accomplish such a task required that the Osage know the relationships of plants, animals, and lands over a distance of some 1,000 miles and know these complex relationships so well that they could transfer an abstract sense of time, time in the sense of organic growth, from plant to plant over that distance and use the growth of a mountain plant as a gauge or calendar for their corn.

Here we have no general knowledge, no principles valid in all cases, no knowledge that can be tested in the laboratory. We have a knowledge totally unlike western scientific knowledge and yet an understanding of great profundity. Within this scope of knowledge we have an intuitive understanding of the spiritual nature of life which enables people to act in a purposive and predictive sense. Classifications, in this system of thinking, defy western categorization; they are not deductive and cannot be reached through any complicated logical path. Yet they exist and serve amazingly well in determining how a specific people will relate to an environment. Thus if we can learn anything from this example the first lesson must be that classifications, as we have been used to them in the western schemata of knowledge, are useless when we approach a more intimate relationship with the universe.

The hallmark of relatedness or synthesis is experience rather than interpretation. In the synthetic process we first experience the unity of existence and then, upon reflection and further experience, we begin to separate elements of that experience into useful categories of knowledge in which similarities and intimacies are the most important criteria. For that reason most Indian classifications of birds, animals, reptiles, and other life forms begin with the activities of these creatures and seek to identify similar purposive behaviors. Simple morphology, as western peoples have conceived the organic world, have little part in the Indian format; when they do, the morphological features that are chosen are understood as indicating similarity of temperament, not

evolutionary origins. Thus our species, birds, and bears are considered to be the "two-leggeds," and we behave in many respects as if we were a single species. A good Indian medicine man can conduct a sophisticated tour of human and animal personality by describing the traits that convinced Indians long ago that the "two-leggeds" were a specific group.

The shift from isolating things to relating them involves the recognition of a different form of preserving knowledge. When we isolate and then interpret phenomena, our basic intent is to derive principles from which we can predict future behavior, illustrate mechanical operations, or analyse into further component parts. Our interpretation and rearrangement of data is most important. In the tradition which relates everything in specific terms the immediate experience is most critical and everything is oriented toward a preservation of the exact conditions under which something happened. Little effort is devoted to rearranging the elements of that particular experience that first attracted us and made it seem important. Thus the tradition seeks to preserve as accurately as possible everything that took place.

When we look at the traditions of the North American peoples we discover that they have carried down over the generations many accounts of phenomena we would consider amazing today. The Ojibway of western Ontario, for example, relate stories of the water monster who lived in the lakes and rivers and tipped over the canoes of the unwary and unlucky. Pictures of this creature are liberally scattered over much of Ontario and eastern Canada. The Sioux also relate the story of water monsters and their description correlates to an astounding degree with the Ojibway tale. Further west the Indians of the Pacific Northwest have traditions that the lakes of the region were formerly much larger and contained monsters who stirred the waves unmercifully whenever humans ventured out on the water. A correlation of all accounts, of petroglyphs and pictographs of the various tribes, and an acknowledgment that this particular set of stories is always intimately tied to specific lakes should be sufficient to inform us that at one time within the memory of these tribes, a different and perhaps more spectacular form of life inhabited this continent. If we use our imaginations we can see in this tradition the presence of the group that we have always called "dinosaurs."

Now to suggest that human beings have been living in North America since the Mesozoic is radical only when we restrict our interpretation of human knowledge to that already accumulated by western peoples through the process of isolating elements of experience. The suggestion seems less radical when we remember that the oral traditions do not seek to interpret as much as they attempt to recall and remember precisely the unusual events of the past. The possibility that these stories contain the elements of past experiences is heightened considerably when we view contemporary research on the dinosaurs and discover that the latest and most precise interpretation of this group conceives them as warm-blooded, bearing their young live, and traveling in herds, all characteristics of mammals and not reptiles, and possessing behavior patterns not unlike those which the Indian water monster tales relate.

What are we to do when a tradition which has always

been seen by western peoples as primitive and superstitious now threatens to become an important source in a new and important revolution in paleontology? Are there other important areas of experience that have been preserved by oral traditions that have been neglected or discarded by the scientific mind because of the all-consuming goal of achieving truth by the isolation of elements of experience? Here we have a dilemma of major proportions which strikes the western mind at precisely the most vulnerable point. Isolation has not produced truth as much as it has produced specialists who studiously avoid synthesis in favor of a continuing subdivision of information into increasingly separated disciplines. We finally arrive at the fundamental question underlying the scope of human knowledge: is truth divisible into categories or is it synthetic, incorporating all aspects of experience and understanding?

The present situation calls for a sense of maturity between cultures that no other period of human history has required. We must now begin to transcend all other parochial considerations in our understanding and move forward into a new period of synthesis in which all information is brought into a coherent whole. Alfred North Whitehead remarked rather casually in *Science and the Modern World* that "it takes a very unusual mind to undertake the analysis of the obvious." Now the obvious always refers to those things that are so commonly accepted as to be considered beyond serious consideration by scholars. So the task of moving human knowledge forward has generally fallen to the amateur, to those who simply wish to know, and to the humble souls who refuse to surrender an idea to the guardians of human knowledge, the academics; those souls who understand knowledge as the possession of the whole human species and not the plaything of the specialist.

North American peoples have an important role to play in the determination of knowledge in the future. They represent thousands of years of experience in living on this continent and their customs and traditions, the particular and sometimes peculiar ways they have of approaching problems, of living, and of protecting the lands, are not simply the clumsy adjustments of primitives but the seasoned responses of people who synthesized and summarized the best manner of adapting themselves to the world in which they lived. Insofar as their insights can be translated into principles which can reorient western thinking, scientific and social, and insofar as North American peoples can understand their own traditions and abide by them, to that degree we can produce a more sophisticated, humane, and sensible society on this continent.

So the provinciality of which Whitehead speaks is really the provincial manner in which we today look at the experiences and memories of our ancestors and define the history of our species and planet. World history, Arnold Toynbee once remarked, is a parochial affair comparable to a map of the Mediterranean area being considered a true and accurate map of the world. Human knowledge cannot be provincial, but must enclose the planet and render an accurate account of its nature and growth. We are today on the threshold of a new era in which this task will be accomplished—and it is perhaps the most exciting time of any that our species has experienced. Let us have the emotional and intellectual maturity to bring it to pass. □

WHAT LITTLE GIRLS ARE MADE OF



Stories by:

Patricia O'Donnell
Susan Wheeler
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Pat Kaluza
Jane R. Howard
Doris Read
Kathleen Prince
Mary Bunker Peterson

MOUNTAINS

Patricia O'Donnell

They were in Colorado; huge, empty skies broken by spires of conifers. She had never seen the mountains before. Her first view had been at night, driving in from Iowa. At the end of the long plains, a solitary light on top of a dark spot in the sky. "There they are," the man she was travelling with said. "Oh, you're kidding," she said. "That's just a light in the sky." "No, this is the beginning of the mountains." She had never really believed they would be there, though she had heard about them since early childhood. As the sun came up over them, she felt she was acting out a dream. The man beside her said he had no real awe of the mountains; she was too amazed to respond. As they drove into the city, even the gas stations and quick-food stands were romantic, unbelievable, the early light dusting them with a foreign glow. The man beside her had long, slim fingers; unusually pale for a man. They tapped the wheel lightly, alternating, as he drove.

They arrived at the man's friends' house where they would be staying. They were three young men; just waking up, they were bare-chested, tousled, genial. The house was pale pink stucco, with two large pine trees out in front. Throughout the day the sun barely filtered through the thick needles, and the scent filled the house. The young men became boisterous as the day wore on; they worked little, obtaining their sustenance by various, not always discreet or legal, ways. She soon became their friend, a sort of group mascot. By not saying too much, smiling a lot, and occasionally going off into long gales of laughter, she attracted their affection. Any one of the three, if given the chance, would gladly have fallen in love, had they not known how she felt about their friend, the man she was travelling with. It was on her face; she rarely laughed when he spoke, even when he spoke lightly, but instead would savor each word, watching as he talked, then would turn her gaze to the wall, or the table, and be still a moment.

That night they went out on the town. Strains of "Night in the city looks pretty to me" alternating in her mind with the horns, the flashing lights, the attractions of this place. Walking arm-in-arm down the street with one of her new friends and the man she travelled with. Into a bar where a girl in skimpy fake suede fringe and satin danced on a little stage; it all seemed very funny. A sign volunteered "Go-go girls needed." "Why don't you apply?" one of the friends asked. She looked at the fringe on the girl's gyrating body, her smooth, plump thighs, then down at her own blue-jeaned body. "No, I don't think so."

She slept on the couch that night, her friend sleeping downstairs. In the morning she crept down to his small room, entirely filled by a waterbed, and crawled in with him. They talked, rolled in a quilt, exchanging confidences. They toyed with their fears. In mid-morning one of the others brought down a gallon of wine, and for the rest of the day they drank, they laughed. In late afternoon they ventured outside. The air was light and fresh,

the day in relaxed, fading mid-stream. She said "I feel as if this is where I should be, here with you." The mountains were clear in the distance, surrounding the perimeters of the city. In the grass the man she came with found a bright green worm, a fat, brilliant thing. Curled around a twig, they held it up to the sun, agreed it was beautiful. Turning it, they suddenly injured the thing, a drop of red blood swelling from its side, becoming almost as large as the worm itself, curling around its wound. Horrified, the man put the stick back on the grass, saying it depressed him, it was awful. They sat silent, arms curled around their knees, the pines casting long, fragrant shadows on the afternoon.

The next day they went up in the mountains to camp. They chose one of the higher foothills, one covered with pine trees all the way up, except for scattered bare patches. Choosing one of these for their campsite, they pitched two tents, a large one for the three men, a small one for the other two. Below them was a small river with fast-running, clear water. The three men showed them how to slide down the hill on the pine needles; getting a good running start from the top of the hill, they slid the rest of the way on their tennis shoes, occasionally lowering themselves to their haunches and finishing that way. The girl and her friend were timid; at last he gave it a try, sitting down most of the way. She walked down. The sky was being covered with patchy, fleecy clouds. They could see it raining in spots on the hills around them. As they were going down, a rainburst caught them in a sudden, violent shower. Alone in the pine trees, she could hear their shouts at the suddenness of the shower, but could not see them. Running, sliding for a large tree, she reached its dry safety and crouched there, the branches too low for her to stand. Breathing deeply, she thought "I could stay here under this tree, no one would ever find me." She sat very still as the shower went on, having no music in her head, no words, no laughter, only the sound of the rain on the needles and the suddenness of one jagged lightning bolt across the sky. The shower passed as suddenly as it had come on; she could see it moving its dark shadow across the hills. Still she sat there, hearing her own breathing, and it wasn't until the sky was blue and sunny again that they came near, shouting for her, and she crawled out of her hiding place.

That night they had tea after supper and sat by the campfire, watching the slow sun go down from their vantage point in the clearing. All five were quiet, breathing in the clouds of the tea she had made, sipping its sweet, hot flavor. As darkness came on it grew chilly; they piled wood on the fire and donned sweaters and sweatshirts. Her travelling companion suggested they play a game called "What do you want." Starting with him, they were to ask "What do you want" again, and again, and again, never stopping until he gave an answer that satisfied them, that they believed. She jumped at the chance. "What do you want?" "Happiness." "No, what do you *really* want?" "To be an astronaut." "No, what do you

want!" "The adulation of the millions." "Come on, what do you want?" Long silence. "A baseball with Mickey Mantle's autograph on it, and what's more, I have always wanted Mickey Mantle to be my father, and my mother to be Marilyn Monroe. And that's what I really want!" She took his answer lightly until it was her turn, when she was pushed and pushed, and finally all she could think of was: "I want to be a tree. I want to be a tree." And it was true.

That night she lay beside his dark bulk in the tent. Long spell without words, the only sounds the crackling of the remains of the fire and the rustling overhead. She said, "I feel very strange lately. Things that used to be ugly are beautiful—things that have to die, old things. Like an old, decrepit woman on her sickbed with her face full of lines—that seems beautiful to me now. So clear, and sharp; maybe it's the air here." Through the open flap of their tent she could see the shadows moving; the night was alive, strangely light. After a moment she could discern the sound of the stream. She could sense the city they had left behind, in the valley below them, on the other side of the hill. It was full of people, and noisy, and in a bar there was a plump girl in satin and fringe dancing, but up here there was sky, and quiet, and this man beside her in the tent. Because she wanted to stay here always, and never go to sleep, she wasn't aware when she finally did.

The next day she found herself feeling a freedom, a release. She decided that it was the relaxing and dissipation of a fear, the fear being that whatever she was experiencing now was temporary. As they drove past rocky cliffs, turning off the road to stop at a riverbank for lunch, she was working this over in her mind. These scenes were temporary; the exquisiteness of this spot, for example, that very branch rippling between her gaze and the river, the voices in the background. But she felt something growing in her; perhaps she was becoming another person. That was it, she was sure—she had never felt this way before. It was this abandon to being what she perceived, this giving up of old thoughts and ways of feeling, that gave her this feeling of strength today. Certain things did not matter any more; for what could matter in the face of this trembling beauty? If there was a sin in this existence, she decided, it would be to try and hold experience and feeling, either her own or another person's, and imagine that they would never leave.

That evening they returned to the stucco house behind the pines. After supper she and her travelling companion decided to take a walk; a suggestion was hardly

necessary, they were out the door together. The streets were quiet, only an occasional car. They walked through an alley, climbed over a fence, and reached a private, deserted lot. It was a round valley, like a bowl, or one half of a sphere, the other half the sky. The stars were brilliant, amazing; there had been no skies like this where she came from. They saw a falling star, then another; the night was full of falling stars. They were knee-deep in the waving grasses, they smoothed down a spot for themselves to sit on. They were hidden from the world. The stars were their company, the conversation punctuated by their bright dots and dashes. She felt that whatever she said he understood; and what's more, he illuminated those parts of herself of which she was yet unaware. She felt like bursting, a firecracker display, across the sky. She would light up the mountains and be their friend, they would at last be aware of her and know her as she knew

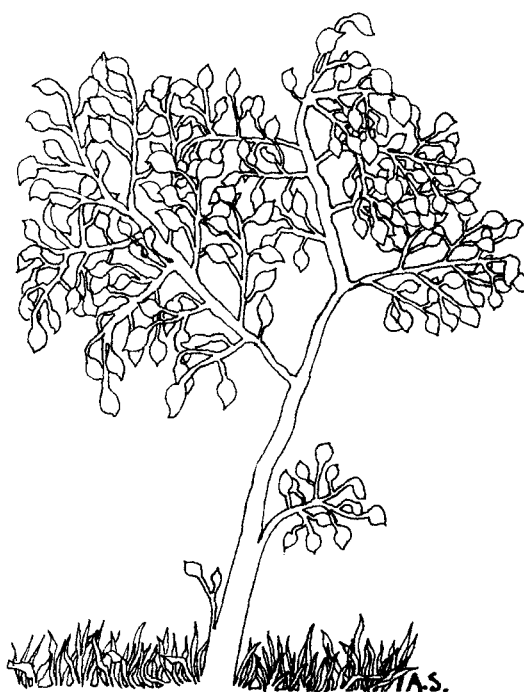
them. Later when she tried to remember exactly what they had talked about, it seemed trivial, ordinary. She decided she must have forgotten most of it, for that night she felt they uncovered great truths.

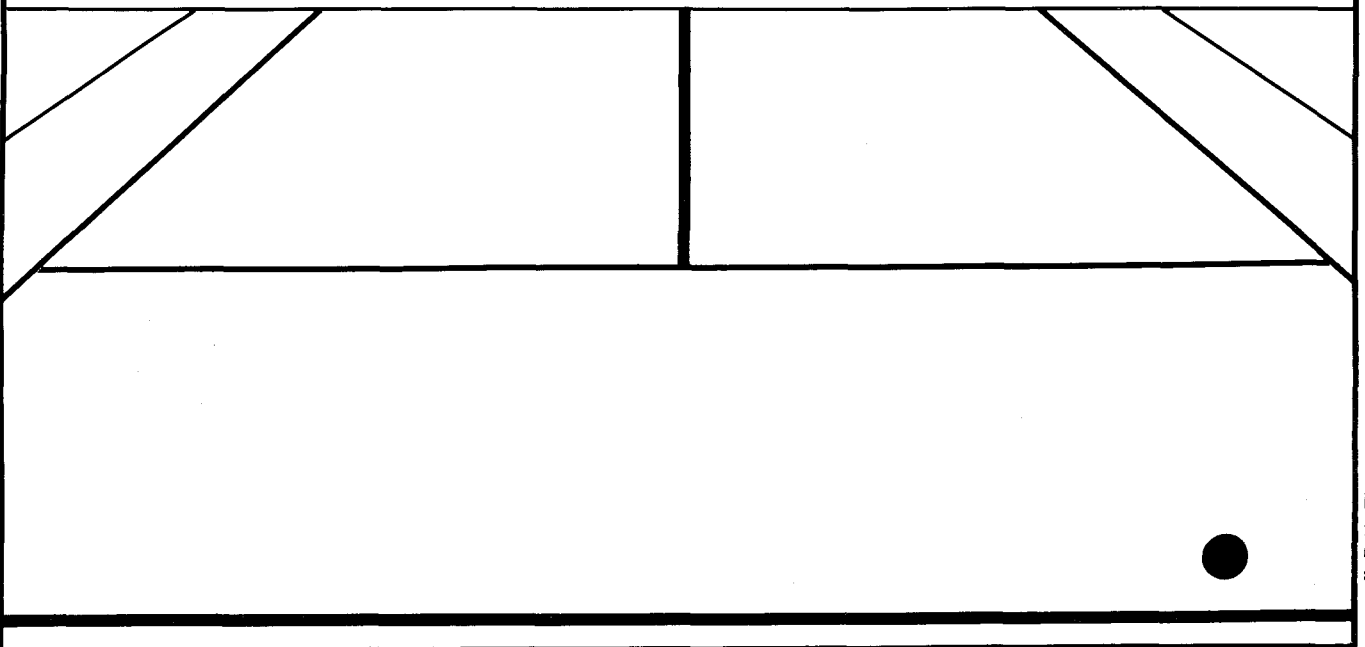
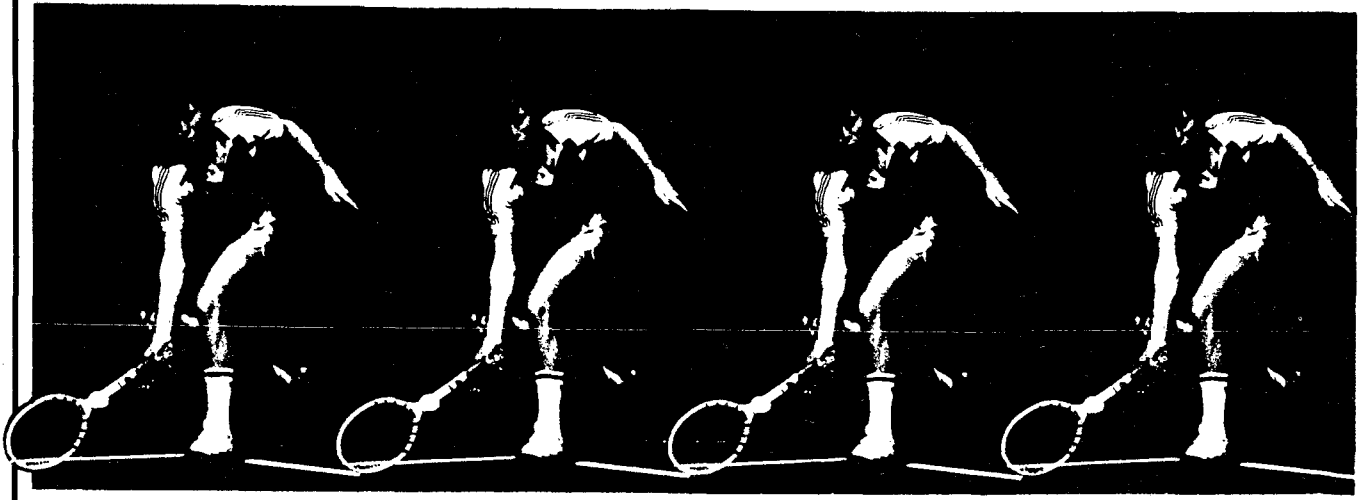
Their last night in Colorado she slept in the waterbed downstairs with him, curled close in her red and black flowered nightgown. She had made that nightgown before she left for Colorado; silly thing, her mother had exclaimed at its impracticality. Now the man said that she looked like a flower that blooms at night. He said they could not make love; how take another person, how ever to understand another person? The innocence in her face hurt him like a stone. They lay close all night, rolling in their

dreams. She dreamed she was crossing a stream on a swaying bridge. The sun was lighting the leaves all around her. Her friend was across the stream, laughing. There were leaves under the bridge, tickling her feet. When she woke it was late, the man she travelled with was tickling the soles of her feet with a feather.

They stood by the car, bags inside. Every excuse for delaying had been used. Finally her friend said to her, Why are we so sad? You'd think we were going to die today, or never see each other again. She laughed, agreed with him, got in the car and slammed the door. They waved to the three young men in the pink stucco house as they drove away. The mountains in the distance glimmered faintly, a glow on them she had never seen before. She held hands with the man she was travelling with until the mountains were out of sight. □

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K. Doble Thompson

HANGIN ON THE WALL

Susan Wheeler

The last line came out wrong. As Stacey sped by the long stretch of graveyard, the chant she and her brothers had intoned in mock southern accents, when looking at headstones and sunken plots, ran in her ears:

I see yo' head-stone up,
I see yo' cas-ket sunk.
But God's got *my* body and it's hangin on the wall.

She knew it should go, "God's got *yo'* body." But ever since her husband had lost his job seven months ago, even though he had a better one now as Director of the Southeast Maine Health Center, that last line tricked her.

Strange this persisted, she thought, when there was no cause to worry anymore. And even more strange, since Ned went back to work, the last line came more insistently, so that when she weeded the vegetable garden, which she could say and mean they kept for fun, or while waiting for her three children at the dentist's, whom they could now pay immediately and therefore didn't have to, that last line would snake into her head and repeat itself.

Oh well. Along with her insomnia, the too quick smile and "Oh-yes-Ned's-fine," she'd say to friends, this would soon pass. It was only time she needed. As it had taken time—almost three years—to get used to Ned's job being threatened, then chiseled away, until, one evening seven months ago, he had come home with the letter saying his salary could no longer be justified, and she could summon neither compassion nor fear, pity nor disgust, not even relief, and had turned to the stove and said to herself, "So."

She braked at the blinking red overhead light at Kade's corner. It was almost seven o'clock and she should go home, unpack the five bags of groceries before Ned arrived from work, poked his head into each parcel like a welfare worker, and nagged at the pork roast bought at Dallard's instead of the A & P, the Camembert instead of the special on cheddar.

The hell with him, she thought, and turned left at Kade Bottling Company. She would stop by the courts to see if any friends were playing tennis and then watch for a while. She followed the dirt road along Lairy River which, on the edge of town, dropped sharply over boulders to Little Lairy Pond. Lining the edge of the pond a row of three story pea-green tenements yearned toward the water, ashamed of themselves. A good blow would push them in. Tenement Row. She shifted into third, then second, to peer at the most dilapidated, as if short-sighted. My building, she said to herself as though it actually belonged to her, or her to it, and she braked the car. That middle one. And the middle apartment in the middle house of the row. The worst. Mine, with plastic

nailed over two windows and a warped back porch, its clothesline tenement crowded with green workmen's shirts, diapers, a brave Budweiser sheet, and swinging from a nail spiked into a post, a defiant red bra. It might be pitiful as hell, that bra, but Stacey liked it, liked the woman who'd gone out and bought it. She probably cheated on welfare. "I hope she robs 'em blind," Stacey thought. "That's what I'd do." And as always when she passed this tenement which she knew she looked at to play with this idea, although she told herself she came to see the river, she looked at the narrow strip of grass along the edge of the water. "At least," she thought, "I could walk there and turn my back to the tenement. At least I could look at the water, the lilies growing in the pond." It was always "at least." And it was always "I" not "we." She, alone, was placed here, and by her own doing, but what she had done or not done to arrive she could not imagine. And she felt comforted by knowing this worst tenement was hers and that even here she could find a tree to sit under and, for a while, forget what had happened to her.

She drove past Tuck's greenhouse, past the row of white Victorian houses belonging to St. Regis Prep School, and when she turned in the lot by the clay courts in front of the gym, the chapel carillon chimed seven bells. None of her friends were playing, but she got out anyway, and halfway down the long slope she saw a young man. He was on court one. It was his motion that made her stop and stare. A small man, a boy really, maybe twenty, twenty-two years old, with long bushy black hair tied with an orange strip of ragged terrycloth low on his forehead, and he was running as if pursued, from net to baseline.

He played like someone she had photographed once for *Canadian Sports*, a motion she had tried to describe for the magazine caption, and the words were words like *gears, pivots, oiled metal, pistons*, but she had never found the word because it was not one thing, it was many things. This man in front of her now hadn't a chance of getting the low lobbed ball. And yet he somehow passed the ball and just beyond the baseline, still running on hard tanned legs, he swung his racquet across his chest and halted. Then the lever that controlled him made him pivot. He looked like an Indian—high cheekbones, dark skin and there was an expression almost of pain which seemed like a mask. Swinging, he scooped the ball which went low across the net. He halted two, perhaps three seconds and then again—internal machinery. He leaned forward and started fast toward the net. In profile his cheekbones looked even higher, his nose and jaw outstanding, out of place in such a small man—an imperfection. He stopped about a foot from the net. Except the motion of him didn't stop. He was on the balls of his feet which kept moving up and down—pistons. And his face, chin thrust forward held to that look almost of pain, but more than that: of someone who wills not so much to win the match, or game, or even this next point, but only to be given the chance at one

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more shot. It was the look of desperation.

Now he was running again, this time almost directly toward her and his eyes, dark brown, seemed almost to beg. At the center baseline, he turned toward the net, dancing, left hand outstretched and cradling the racquet shaft, waiting. And then, with no warning, his shoulders dropped and the racquet head swung limply toward the clay.

Watching, Stacey felt something stop. She stared at him a moment, then glanced to the other side of the net. His partner, a tall skinny man, was opening the gate to get the ball. She looked back at the young man. Had he won the point? No way to know even though he walked directly toward her. Near the fence he glanced up and directly into her eyes. He stopped and stared at her and his eyes looked as if he wanted to reveal something important or to ask a question.

"Did you win the point?" she said.

"Yes," he said. "But just barely. It was luck." His voice was low and controlled, almost a monotone, and it didn't belong with his eyes.

Feeling she was pulled along, she walked slowly down the hill. He waited, motionless on the other side of the wire, and when she was close to it, she said, "What's the score?"

She must have spoken softly because he took a step toward the fence and leaned forward. "I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't hear you."

"I wondered," she said, "what the score was."

"He got me first set. Six-one. It's three-all, second set," and something new was in his eyes now along with the plea, like recognition.

Stacey heard her name called. It was a man's voice and now it said her name again, louder. On the far side of court one, Jack Sayce, who had been playing with the young man, waved his white sailor hat. He smiled his toothy, prep school teacher's grin, a grin she had once liked but decided at a party during this endless summer was profoundly unsatisfactory, not because it had never been tested but because it never could be. There was that much money.

She waved quickly to Jack, smiled perfunctorily, once, then gazed at the young man. "Good luck," she said and tried to memorize his eyes. "I hope you win."

"Why, thank you," he said. He squatted quickly, picked up the ball and, rising, looked at her again. His shoulders made as if to turn, then he hesitated. "Do you play?" he said.

"All the time, this summer," she said. "Far too much. Sometimes two, three times a day. I've almost become a bum. Perhaps I am one." And she was startled by the words as though someone else had accused her.

He smiled in dissent. "It's a great game."

"It's a marvelous game," she said. Jack was watching. "I think your partner's getting restless."

"Oh." He waved his racquet at Jack, then looked at her again as if expecting one word more.

"Good-bye," she said.

He shifted his racquet to the other hand. "Do you play here? On these courts?"

"Yes."

"I'll probably see you again, then?"

She nodded yes.

"Hey there!" Jack was saying. "Are we having a game or are we having a game?" And he laughed.

Stacey looked at the ground. "I'm sorry. I've kept you."

His eyes seemed to hold that pleading look again, even more intensely. "No no," he said. For one, perhaps two moments more he looked at her and she felt she might rise weightless and float like a Chagall figure into his eyes. Taking a step back, she said, "Have a good game."

"I will," he said. "Even if I lose. I always do. Always."

"You won't lose," she said.

"I hope you're right."

"I am." She turned and started up the slope.

Driving out of the lot she caught a glimpse of him in the rear view mirror. He was running, the orange band flapping behind his coarse black hair. It was the motion, partly, she decided. That furious energy. Yet controlled, too. He had control. And the eyes. Caring, wanting, desperate eyes. And unafraid to reveal the wanting. Or was he unaware they revealed so much? She would see those eyes again.

Driving on the overpass she saw, straight ahead, the pink sky with the sun setting red and swollen above Orion's Mountain and lighting up the thunderheads. She slowed and stared as if she had never seen a sunset before. How long had it been since she'd really looked? A long time. The sun darkened, sending watery shoots of ever-deepening red into the sky. She used to stop here with the children. They would watch until the sun dipped behind Orion and then, at seventy-five miles per hour, chase it to Kalloway Bridge, catch it again, lowering behind Kingston Ridge. She shook her head slowly. It had been a long time.

The week after her husband lost his job, they bought a four-thousand dollar twenty-three foot sailing cruiser. Two of the thousand dollars was her money. She had been unwilling to sell stock and had made the first dip into savings, left her by her father, which brought the account from thirteen thousand to eleven. They trailed the boat home from Marblehead in January, and then Ned had thrown up in the driveway and gone to bed with the flu for five days. She carried Julia Child chicken broth to him on a tray, sanded the kitchen cabinets and, by the time he was on his feet, she had painted the kitchen red. She sold her grandfather's Queen Anne's Highboy for five-thousand dollars, enrolled the children in Hilary's spring art class, and signed up for ten weeks of tennis lessons with the prep school coach. In June she won the Tri-Town women's singles tennis tournament and used the small silver-plated Paul Revere trophy as a water dish for the Siamese cat she gave her daughter for her birthday. It occurred to her now that her fault was not that she had buckled under pressure, but that she had resisted too well.

Ned was not in the kitchen although his car had been parked in the driveway—angrily, she knew, because the children's three bikes were overturned in the garage. He would nag at them when they got back from the neighbors, at her for not disciplining them, for being late,

would deliver a sermon on property maintenance which might last through supper. He would fill the house with it. She placed two bags of groceries on the white formica counter and reached for the Camembert. Almost, she wished Ned were here to see the cheese, see it here, now. Some part of her wanted to get it out, over with. There was a thump in the living room and she put the cheese behind a milk carton in the refrigerator. The cat, who must have jumped from the bookcase onto the brass newspaper box, slinked in, staring up at her with blue knowing eyes.

She stood in the bedroom doorway. Ned lay on his stomach on the yellow quilt which cradled his arms, limp at his sides. He slept, his face to the window. She looked at his shoulders, stooped even in sleep, his neck, thick, the skin hanging in loose folds, his white stockinged feet limp over the foot of the bed as if he hadn't the strength to pull himself to his pillow. His rump was too large and soft even for such a stocky man. Through the three years his job had dribbled away, and even during the seven months he was out of work, he had slept like an innocent, while she night after white night stared at the ceiling, listened to his breathing: maddening, oblivious. At 11:30 or midnight she would go to the living room, turn on the lights, prop herself against five pillows on the low yellow couch. She could not bear music. Not even Bach. The *New York Times*, the *Maine Times*, E. B. White, *Legends of the Maine Coast*—they did not work. Nor did vodka and beefamato juice. In May she had begun rolling the TV into the living room. The old westerns had finally done it: John Wayne in *The Alamo*, James Stewart in *Guns of Black Creek*. Her mother's banjo clock taunted: midnight, twelve-thirty, one, one-thirty, two, two-thirty. She would awake around four-thirty or five, the test pattern on the TV screen glaring at her, the loud buzz an emergency. The windows would be black and she'd turn out the lights, go back to their bed and watch the last stars pull back into another grey dawn.

She turned from Ned, went downstairs, across the dining room to the brick porch. She stood on the edge of the porch and stared down the long slope to Pilgrim River. It was low tide and the green marsh grass rose high at the foot of the hill. "Why do you blame him?" she said to herself. It wasn't his fault. And it hadn't been that bad. A man out of work was not a terrible thing unless a wife took it that way. "Which I did. Which I do." But why? The Great Provider fails? "My God, Stacey," she said to herself. Then, "Stop it," she said, and started down the long slope toward the river.

Three years ago Carl Schmidt had become Public Health Administrator for the Tri-Town Center. First Ned and the other workers were no longer to take a month a year for research papers, then two workers were let go to make room for a psychologist Ned called "decadent Freud." Schmidt told Ned to write a public health advice column for local newspapers. "I won't be Ann Landers," Ned said. One day a new psychiatrist arrived with a black box for electric shock treatment. Ned threatened to call newspaper editors. The box disappeared, but Ned was moved to a small room at the end of the hall with only one narrow window near the ceiling. "Leave, for God's sake,"

Stacey had begged, "I'll get a job." "Not while the children are small," he'd said. "Besides, I started the clinic," which he had with two friends seven years ago, and the very stubbornness and loyalty and commitment that had made her fall in love at twenty-three twisted back on itself, made him cling, now pitiful. "Schmidt's old," he'd said. "The Board will tire of him and I'll be director." For three years; Ned coming home, saying that Schmidt had said this, Schmidt had done that; she begging him to leave, not reaching, and finally putting up with it. And because she knew he was unhappy, she'd excused his outbursts which diminished to complaints and then turned to nagging—the food, her hair, the children's teeth, how could she stand Marie Smith's loud laugh, Betsey Dodd's soft voice—which began sometime during the second year and spread cancerous, until last year he had walked into the kitchen an hour and a half early and she'd thought, "Oh Christ, he's home." At the stove her eyes filled with tears and she'd run to the bathroom, turned the water on hard, weeping. Knowing she should stand up to him, stop buffering, wifing him, but no longer having strength. When had she started to put up with all this?

The children made it tolerable: a home-made chemistry set, poster paints on four-foot-wide newsprint spread across the kitchen floor, a triangular tree house she'd made with them, rowing on the river, catching bass. But he robbed her during the last seven months of Amy, her youngest, the most imaginative. It was Amy's last year at home before first grade, before Stacey would go back to work as a photographer. Ned was home, full time, out of work, and he field marshalled her life. Why didn't she vacuum in the morning? She should take Amy to Fort Henry instead of Fort McKlean because she could combine the trip with shopping and save on time and gas. Seven months, the last seven months of full-time mothering had been taken from her, wormed rotten twelve hours a day after twelve hours a day, Ned home, burrowing into her life. How could she forgive it?

And how could she stop the nagging? And in three weeks Amy to go to school from eight to three. And Stacey, unfit to housewife with no children at home, willed to go back to her Leica, but now, at age thirty-four, had not picked it up for almost four years, had gone soft, sloppy; could not telephone papers, magazines and ask for jobs. "Take a year off for yourself," Ned had said after his new job two weeks ago. They sat on the brick porch in white wicker chairs, drinking martinis. "Have fun for a year before you go back to the camera." She had nodded no, sensing that for her, life alone in a house built for children would be no life at all but the slowest form of death, the endless quest to fill the days: tennis on Tuesdays, pottery Wednesdays, five days' search for yellow trim for bathroom curtains. She was not fit for that. But not fit also to unpack her Leica in the carton in Ned's study, to make those calls, had shaken her head on the porch that evening as they watched the sun lowering behind the poplar leaves fluttering silvery-green at the edge of the field. "No."

He looked at her, puzzled. "What do you want?"
"I want to take pictures again."

"Then why don't you?" and his brown eyes were so concerned.

"I don't know," she said. Not adding, *I'm afraid. Afraid it's too late.*

The children rolled down the long slope, over and over on the grass.

"What do you feel like doing?"

"I don't know." *I don't know what I feel or if there is feeling left in me.*

She stood at the edge of the river and stared at a heron flapping low over the mudflats in front of the smooth grey rocks, the pine trees. She supposed it was beautiful. How could she say this? She supposed it was beautiful. How could this have happened? That she, Stacey, who as a child lay on a straw mattress under a full August month of crackling Quebec Northern Lights; who had set her alarm at five in the morning to roam the Montreal streets to watch and hear the city wake; who, each spring, skipped school to watch the ice floes on the St. Lawrence River slowly turning, breaking up and drifting out to sea; who, at her first musical with front row center seats, wearing a pale yellow organdy dress with a wide bow, kept climbing the brass rail to get closer to the stage and whose father gripped her sash to keep her from falling into the orchestra pit; who sailed four hours a day each summer so she could win the Labor Day Regatta which she did for three years; and who also at the lake begged brother Dan to let her sneak behind him into Grainger's General Store at night to hide behind kerosene cans and listen to man stories told around the wood stove; who took pictures with her Brownie camera and learned if she lay on her back, brother Dan's eleven-pound salmon held proud-high looked even bigger and pleased him with a picture of it taken from just that position, and that if she stood close to Grandmother's face the wrinkles came out a reel of lines that didn't please her, but if begged, the old woman would let her take a picture of her bumpy hands which Stacey Scotch-taped on the wall next to a picture of bark; and later, with a Kodak zoom lens she could take close-ups at the zoo of people and that only ancients and children were unafraid to show delight and that newspapers would print her pictures. And when she was nineteen, she could, if ordered by a testy police editor for *The Halifax Sun*, take a picture of a man shot in the chest and lying on a green straw rug with his eyes crazy, and not throw up until she reached the sidewalk. But she came to realize, after a year of newspaper photographs, she was getting sloppy and something was going dead inside, so one day when she passed Ann Traft and Tony Laine in the hall outside the printing room and heard them talking about how few pictures they could get away with taking on a rainy May day, and Tony said, "At least rain is good weather for fucks," she went to the managing editor and said she wanted out. "I have to leave." And Amby, who was murder on the men but sweet with women said, "For God's sake, why? Ann's leaving soon. You'll get a raise," but she hung onto the no. And two weeks later, with no job, she pushed through the green door and onto Brislows Street and she felt so clean

and free she thought she'd burst. She walked twelve blocks to Descartes Street eating a mocha ice cream cone and stopped by the jonquils in green tins at the corner of Montagu and Tanner and stared at the old man in baggy green wool pants and a khaki parka who sold the flowers, at the purple lines on his nose, the blackheads as big as K cereal all over his face. She had a sense of him enduring, and she knew she'd come back and take him, just like that, next to the flowers and in front of the barbershop with letters printed too big for the small window. And he said, "Lady, you just gotta be in love." She laughed and said yes, she supposed in a way she was, and he said, "No suppose about it," and gave her a bunch of jonquils only slightly browned at the tips and said it was his wedding present.

Two hours later in Kaleb's Camera Shop, while she was looking at a tripod, the owner, Blake Kaleb, asked was she a photographer. He told her he sold free lance to *Halifax Magazine* and *Nova Scotia* and last week made *National Profiles* and showed her a picture of a tugboat docked next to a salt pile in front of a brick building, and she saw how he'd blurred the brick soft and velvety so that the tug guard rail stood out hard and made the boat look fat, and how the kemp bumpers bulged like buffalo backs and yet single strands of rope stuck out coarse as wire, and she knew he knew what he was doing. She told him she usually took people but needed to learn this, too; and suddenly she had a job and an hour later she stood on a stool arranging Polaroid cameras on a high metal shelf while his white toy poodle sat beside her. She brought him hot pastromi sandwiches from the delicatessen across the street and he taught her to use Kodalith film and open the lens two extra f-stops to make the row of birch trees look etched against Lake Dwayne. And she learned that, although she could learn from Blake, it was hard for him to learn from her, because he was a man and thirty-five and she was only a kid. Then one warm October Sunday when they walked Molls Island beach photographing sandpipers, she learned she wasn't a kid anymore. And that she wasn't very nice. And she could want him badly enough to take him from his wife and child on Christmas Eve, take two of his three weeks' vacation and meet her mother's best friend on the slopes of Jay Peak and lie she was here with roommates and then go back to Blake and almost convince herself that just because she wanted, she was absolutely right. And all that time he taught her, and she took of his knowledge and took of his skill and his body and his time until one weekend while they shot over forty rolls apiece on Brimstone Island, his wife had a premature baby who died the next week. And that, she could not take. Nor could he. She woke up crying for weeks, yet learned she could work for *New Brunswick Monthly* in Dalhousie and her pictures sharpened, took on edge, and more: she learned that, up to now, she had tried to make a statement. Now she searched not to state but to expose the mystery of a life and there was a difference. Which no longer meant sixty or a hundred shots. It meant living on George and Marion Waldron's farm for a week in Kingston, milking cows, baking Indian pudding, talking, and only then could she begin to approach the mystery. That Christmas with grandmother in Montreal she took pic-

tures of the old woman again, and looking at them, she knew what she would have to do. She quit her job and went home, not to live with her parents, but to be in Montreal which she knew. And it was there, taking pictures of Mount Royal in the early morning mist, of an old woman in a brown wool scarf climbing on her knees the St. Joseph Basilica steps, of her father and his friends stepping out of the polished walnut elevator doors of the Sun Life Building Friday night, that she began to learn what she had been trying to do. Photographer's Co-op, then the Quebec Guild on Sherbrooke Street took some of her pictures, and Quebec Photography chose her "Woman at St. Joseph" for a traveling exhibit. She was twenty-three and took pictures of her friends' weddings: Barbara's wedding, Dee's, Sara's, Judy's, but it was at Happy's reception at the Ritz that Paul Hannah, peeved she wouldn't give up an assignment to go skiing at Mont Tremblant, had said, "I see you growing old, alone."

It was 1960 and they stood in front of the black marble fireplace beside a piece of medieval armor. She had laughed, but a chill went through her. She had beat it off before, but this time it took. Six months later she was engaged to Henry Givens, broke it off, and a little over a year after that she met Ned. Driving down Sherbrooke Street West on that first evening in a December snowstorm, he talked about working on a Pueblo reservation in New Mexico. He had seen children bussed to a school fifty miles away in San Jose where they would live for eight months. The children were given brushes and combs in plastic bags and lined up in front of a row of sinks and told how to brush their teeth and comb their hair and wash, and one nine-year-old boy began to cry with his new toothbrush in his mouth. "I wish you could have seen his face," Ned said, and she looked at Ned, his high forehead, the lines at his eyes too deep for a man thirty-one years old, his jaw flat-stubborn at the chin, his mouth large, the lower lip full and marvelously sensuous in such an austere face and she wished she had been there too. And with him. The next night when he drove her home over Jacques Cartier Bridge, she stared not at the water but at his hands, large and so gentle on the wheel, and wished she'd known him all her life; and later felt it wasn't right she had been rattling around loose for so many years without knowing him. Then one morning two weeks after they'd met, he called her at work and took her to La Soupière for lunch to tell her he'd been offered a job in Maine and would move in just fifteen days. She almost cried right there in the restaurant, couldn't eat; and although he said he'd write and come to see her weekends, she didn't trust him until, when he left, the week after Christmas, she found out he did write, and every day, and called Wednesday nights and came to see her weekends, or told her which train to take to Portland, Maine, and mailed her money for the ticket. On her birthday, January twenty-third, her train got stuck for hours in Rapid Falls Junction and he drove the forty-five miles and met her at three a.m. in his green MG with his brown hair mussy and red stubble all over his chin, and took her to his apartment on the top floor of a Victorian house with a round stained-glass window of a drake in the bedroom. The day before he'd bought three dozen daffodils, and they sat in a

milk carton on his bureau in front of an orange and black poster of New England sports car rallies. And on the narrow brass bed he kissed her all over and they slept and woke and made love and slept again.

Five months later in his racing dinghy on Lac St. Louis, she headed the boat into the wind, jib flapping as he hauled up the mainsail, and she watched him turn to her. As he came toward her smiling, she who had sailed all her life, had slid up the seat, handing the tiller to him, and knew for sure she was in love. Yet before they were married she woke up with dreams of standing in Dorval Airport. The Canadian customs officer was frowning at her passport, pointing to it, and when she looked, her picture was there but her name had been erased. Or woke sweaty with a dream of having put one rubber band on her wrist which split into many bands circling her waist, her legs, her arms so she could not move.

They were married June seventh and she refused a week's assignment on Great Chebeague Island in Maine and planned her days so she could make lunch for him and be home in time to cook beef stroganoff for supper for him and then, with children, she'd been startled by a love that sprang up for them, fierce and primal like her breasts swollen with milk. And she had thought they'd been enough. She took pictures, but not for money and not every day and then not every week and once, after months of not touching her Leica, she shot a roll on Amy's second birthday and looking at them judged: sentimental. She had not touched the camera since. Had taken the children through underground Revolutionary War tunnels, the beach, Mount Moriah, saying *Someday I'll come back here with my Leica. Someday*. Until the last three years and that seven months, watching Ned, slow in his walk, hesitate even in the boat, unable to decide whether to sail to McInnes Island or up river to the Landing, and then the nagging, and she had even lost that *someday*. "My God," Stacey said to herself. How could she have let all this happen? How was it possible? She stood at the edge of the river, turned, and started slowly up the hill. "Jesus, Stacey," she said to herself. "Jesus Christ."

She stood in Ned's study and looked at her three cameras packed in shredded newspaper in the carton. She reached for the Leica in the black case. The leather felt stiff and unfamiliar. She stared at it a moment and then put it down.

The next morning she dropped the children off at the pool for lessons and drove to the courts. The young man was there, again on court one. From the car she watched him stand at the baseline with two balls in his hand, ready to serve. He must be part Indian, she said to herself. He threw the ball high, eyes desperate on it, and then he was on his toes, straining up high, his racquet begging for the ball.

A thump on the roof of her car and she jumped. Her doubles partner, Bob Hastie, stood beside the car and she opened the door. She liked Bob. He owned a small packaging company in Effingham Falls which he'd started ten years ago. There were only sixty people in the company and he knew he'd never get rich on it, but it was his and he worked hard at it and he liked it and it showed. It showed in the good deep lines he'd earned on his forehead, in the

way he'd gesture and talk too loud at a party about inventing a new plastic bubble to protect glass bottles. It showed in his grey solemn eyes. Bob and his wife Dassy had come to the house the day after Ned was out of work, offered Ned a job which he refused, and Bob had been the only one able to use the word: "humiliating." And then, "I'm very damned sorry." And a few minutes later, "I've been there too," which was the base line of comfort. He never spoke of it again, and for the seven months Ned was out of work, he never once asked the careless cruel question, "How are you?" or worse, "How's Ned?"

"How bad shall we beat the Kanes today?" he said and twisted the tip of his brand new goatee, smiling.

"Six-four, six-three?" she said, looking at the young man.

"Too generous," he said. "Six-two, six-one."

At the gate they halted. The boy lunged for a backhand that passed inches beyond his racquet. He halted, followed the ball with his eyes, and seeing that it was in, turned to Jack Sayce. Holding up his racquet, he palmed the strings with his other hand three times, in salute. The look of pain had left his face for a moment and Stacey liked that in him; the intense caring, the wanting, but not lost in it, gobbled up. Again, she thought, "control."

"Have you ever seen him before?" she asked Bob.

"Yeah. Since last week. Plays all the time."

"Do you know his name?" she said.

"No idea," he said and stuck his hands in his pockets and pulled up on his white shorts.

"He's so good to watch," she said and Bob looked at her quickly. "The control, I mean," she said.

"He runs, for sure," Bob said.

"That's partly it," she said.

"Relentless," Bob said.

"You're right. That's it, exactly. He will not give up."

Now he was walking toward them and when he saw Stacey he smiled, a beautiful smile of warmth and recognition. "You have your racquet," he said stopping. He glanced at Bob, nodded once and looked back at her.

Bob was saying something about his towel. He had left his towel in the car and now he was running on chunky legs up the hill, his forty-one year old paunch jiggling.

"Are you playing singles?" the boy said, and his eyes seemed to hold that pleading look as if it were important to him to know.

"Doubles," she said. "With the Trevors, over there on court three." She realized he had no idea who the Trevors were—didn't care.

"I hope you win," he said, and introduced himself, "Stephen Baker." It was a beautiful name and Stacey repeated it to herself.

"Gordon has a wicked serve," she said, "with backspin. Stephen," she said, "sometimes my racquet and the ball don't even connect."

"Look," he said. "Backspin isn't that tough." He gripped the wire gate with one hand. "What you do is step into it. Every inch the ball rises makes it harder to hit. The longer you wait, the tougher it is. You have to get it quick. And you have to lean into. . . ."

"Hey, you two!" It was Jack Sayce, walking toward them with his preppy grin and Stephen flushed slightly. It

was enchanting. Bob was beside her and as the two of them passed by Stephen, he said, "Just step into it," and Stacey felt that this was the very most precious piece of advice anyone had told her.

She played better than she ever had before, leaning into the ball for hard forehand shots, catching most of Gordon's serves inches off the ground, returning many of them and glancing at Stephen Baker, nodding when their eyes met. "My God," Bob said. "You've never played like this!" and when he pecked her cheek she smelled Karate lotion and wanted to laugh. Later, when Stephen was opposite her on court one, she felt his energy pumped diagonally across the courts, and she ran to the net, hitting overheads at mid-court, and miraculously, some of them were impossible for even Gordon to return. Soon she was laughing, exhilarated in her new skill, her control; and as if the energy were transmissible even from her, Bob, for the first time, returned each of Gordon's serves, sending the ball down the baseline where Carol couldn't even touch it, turning to her, twirling his goatee evilly.

Once she went to the gate to retrieve the ball and found Stephen holding it out to her. "You're getting it," he said.

"It works," she said and held out her racquet.

He put the ball in the center of the strings, held it there and looked at her so hard she felt an ache in her chest and she wanted to put her arms around him. Still his hand was on the ball and she could keep it back no longer. "It feels so good to watch you, Stephen," she said. "You play so hard, so well."

He did not look surprised or embarrassed as she had expected, but he lifted the ball once from the racquet and placed it in the center of the strings again. "Thank you, Stacey," he said.

She turned slowly, as if pulling from one dream to another, and walked toward Bob, looked at his brave new beard, his stomach, and she forgave him middle age, and forgave Gordon his extreme height, his stoop, even Jack Sayce his untested prep-school teacher's grin and Carol her high, almost childlike voice, her walk, slow, apologetic. She forgave them all. Soon Stephen was leaving and she missed an easy shot from Carol. He walked up the hill with Jack and after Jack pulled out of the lot, he straddled his Honda, and Stacey thought how nice it was he rode open to the wind.

That evening Jack and Ann Sayce and Carol and Gordon Trevor sat on the brick porch Ned had built that summer, drinking Tom Collins'. It was almost six o'clock. Storm clouds built high and dark across the river over King's Ridge, and the air was so hot and steamy, Ned set up the electric fan on one edge of the porch. Jack knew infuriatingly little about Stephen Baker, except that he was in a training program for Upward Bound held for two weeks each summer, and because he had looked hard at Stacey when she asked, she couldn't press him. Soon the talk turned to Ned's new job, and he leaned back in the rattan chair, one arm over the back of it and told about the two public health workers he had hired, the Outreach Program he would start. He crossed his long legs and balanced the Danish highball glass on one knee, his hands large and gentle around the fluted base. "Ned's so as-

sured," Stacey said to herself. Night before last they had made love, his hands at first lightly tracing her body, until he wrapped his arms around her, holding her hard and sure, the way he used to. She had felt the difference at once. Had felt that difference just a week—only one week—after his new job. During the last three years, especially the seven months, his fingers were often stiff, tense, digging into her shoulder even at first touch, as if coming not to her, Stacey, for love, but clinging to the edge of land. She had been happy he could finally lose himself in her, but after months of it, she had tensed. She learned to force relaxation and, after a while, he would too; but that first touch stayed with her during their lovemaking, making her fearful. And last night, after they teased each other, whispering, laughing softly together, he had come into her and held her with such sure strength that she had let go completely, knowing he would keep her arms and legs from flying apart from her body. Afterwards, she had felt such a deep peace that she had gone to sleep before he did. In the morning she woke up, remembering, and smiled at the ceiling. She curled into his back, pressing her thighs and knees into his, careful not to place her cold toes on his calves, and rubbed her cheek on his shoulder, breathed in the faint good smell of dried sweat. He stirred back into her, still asleep and then she drew back. She stared at his shoulder, for a moment resentful he had so easily made her, too, forget the past years.

On the porch she watched him sip his drink, run his tongue over his full lower lip and again she was angry. Already, he had let go of the seven months, the three years. His adjustment was almost obscene.

"God, it must have been tough on both of you, these last months," Jack said. But he didn't put enough misery into it, and Stacey, nodding yes, thought how impossible it would be for Jack to understand. There was something wrong with Jack. With all these prep school teachers. She couldn't imagine them going through what Ned had. Most of them had gone to expensive schools, many to St. Regis, and by coming home they remained perpetually only a few years older than their charges. Tenure clinched it. Tenure and inheritance which seemed to come at about the same time in their lives. Risk was removed, as if by surgery, and in its place came white water canoeing, rock climbing, the hunt for deer—man against nature, the challenge of an era, passed. They might as well dress in armor and charge each other with poles. And the wives. Passed cheese, volunteered in schools, hospitals, held part-time jobs in the library, the health center, letting nothing interfere with children, with husbands. They talked of Vassar and Smith, the year abroad all by themselves, the jobs they had held, the people they used to be before they got married. Took up organic gardening, yoga, yogurt. Practiced natural childbirth under surgical lights in scrubbed tiled hospitals and talked with religious fervor of controlling labor pains by breathing, as if only pain could momentarily bring back direct experience in lives that conspired to remove them from it.

Jack Sayce brought up Hurricane Donna. Last weekend, his brother and family had been caught in a twenty-three foot O'Day sailing cruiser at the Isles of Shoals. Their engine had broken and the anchor lines

dragged half-way across the harbor toward the breakwater. "They're just damned lucky to be alive. They were convinced they would die," he said, smiling.

"They were?" Stacey said.

"Absolutely," Jack said.

"My God," Stacey leaned forward. "How long did the storm last?"

"Three, four hours."

"What did he say about it?"

Jack shrugged. "Not much. Just that he was damned scared."

"And his wife? She was there? Too?" Stacey said.

Jack nodded and reached for the cheese. Spreading Camembert to the edges of a wheat cracker, he held it out to her.

Stacey shook her head, no. "What did his wife *do* during all this?"

"Sat, I guess. Waited it out." He offered the cracker to Carol who said in her high voice, "Oh Stacey, Camembert's my favorite. And this smells so nice and stinky." A group chortle at the word "stinky," charmingly appropriate in Carol's little-girl voice. "Did you get it at the Bread and Cheese Shop?"

Stacey nodded, once, her eyes on Jack. "Did his wife know she might die?" she said.

"Oh yes, she knew all right. Sure you don't want some cheese?" he said to Stacey and reached for the knife.

"No. What else did she say about it?" Stacey said.

"Very little," he said. This time he selected Norwegian flat bread between his thumb and forefinger. "Oh, I have two pieces."

"She must have said something," Stacey said. "You don't damned near die without at least one impression."

The cracker crumbled in Jack's hand under the weight of the knife and he laughed. "Help!" he said. "Emergency! Bring up the reserves!"

"I'll get napkins," Ned said.

"That's all right," Jack said. "Just tell me where they are."

"I know where they are." Carol started for the screen door. "I'll get Stacey's left-over Christmas tree ones and we'll pretend we're cold in the Arctic."

"Did your sister-in-law say what she thought as they drifted?" Stacey said. "Or while they were waiting for the storm to end?"

Jack, shifting the flat bread to his left hand, licked the Camembert from one thumb and smacked his lips. "Well," he said slowly, "she did say that. . . ." Carol was back with the Christmas tree cocktail napkins just as Jack's cracker broke on his lap and the answer was lost in a drama of minutiae. Stacey realized then that she had been straining forward too far, her voice had been too urgent, and that no one except her particularly cared about the woman's brush with death. She forced her fingers to relax on the wicker armrest and sat back in her chair.

While the others talked of children's swim lessons, ski lessons, the St. Regis unbeaten soccer team last winter, and Anne Sayce told about the annual football game in the snow that the prep school staged each January between students and faculty, it occurred to Stacey that she wished she'd been in the hurricane. She wished she'd drifted

toward the rocks and finally, ultimately, faced death. She needed something like that to beat the vast passivity out of her bones. If you had a hurricane just once in your life, she said to herself, you'd be all right. That wasn't what got you. It was this, right here, that was killing her. The enormous energy it took to avoid a serious question, to relax, to practice the fine art of being animated over absolutely nothing. It was Jack Sayce, spreading cheese. It was Ned now asking Carol if she wanted one drop of lime, or two, in her Tom Collins. It was Anne Sayce talking about football, a game she had never played. It was this Christ-awful politeness, the hideous ease with which she, Stacey, could, if she chose, fill her days with trivia, and sleepwalk through middle age.

"And the marvelous thing was," Anne was saying about the football game she had not even seen, "the absolutely marvelous thing. . . ."

"Do you believe that?" Stacey said.

There was silence and everyone looked at her. Anne's eyes narrowed, sensing danger. "Believe what?" she said.

"Believe it was absolutely marvelous," Stacey said. She stood and started for the screen door. "Excuse me," she said and went to the bathroom. She stood in front of the sink and stared at the woman in the mirror. The woman's eyes were large and grey. Blank. "Jesus, Stacey," she said to herself. "What a thing to say to Anne." What a stupid, cruel thing. "Take *hold*," she whispered, but the grey-blue eyes stared back at her, wide, vacuous, afraid.

"I couldn't believe you!" Ned said later as they stood in the driveway watching the Trevors leave. "Christ, you were rude! As if Anne had deliberately insulted you."

"She insults the human race."

"Oh, for God's sake," he said.

"Oh damn her!" Stacey started for the steps in front of him. "I'm sick of her bloody smile, her slop. I can't stand her teeth. And her face. That something-just-too-exciting-for-words-is-about-to-happen-to-me face. And it never does happen," she turned to him at the door, one hand on the knob. "Not one God-damned thing ever happens and it never will and someday she'll wear that bloody expression in a coffin. They'll engrave it on her tomb! 'Something too too marvelous for words was always about to happen to Annie, but never quite did.' Did you see her going on and on about that idiot football game? SHE's never played football, her husband never played football. She has a family of four GIRLS for Christ's sake and not one of them will ever play football. She didn't even see the game! How the hell," and she knew she was shouting, "how the Christ can she give a Crusader's crap about twenty pimply adolescents she doesn't even teach!"

She stood at the picture window in the dining room and stared at the river. Soon Ned was beside her, his face expressionless.

"Well," he said to the window. "Well, well."

Stacey glanced at him, his hands on his khaki pockets, his broad shoulders slightly stooped, but no longer the stoop of a person beaten, the stoop of a tall man who doesn't need to swagger. His face was tanned from sailing all summer, his jaw so set and assured that she wanted to

slap him. She started for the porch.

"Just a minute," he said and she halted. "Look," he said to her back. "I'm not sure what's going on with you and that little outburst, but something sure as hell is and we better talk about it."

Little outburst, she thought. So that was what he wanted. A little talk. Let the little woman have her little outburst and no matter what was wrong, Poopsey would fix.

"There's nothing you can do," she said.

"Can't you even talk about it?" his voice oozing concern.

Amy, aged six, came crying from the porch. Brother Sam had called her mud fort "dumb" and flattened it with a spatula. Sam said he had started the fort first and Amy and Candace had taken over. Ned wondered why they were taking kitchen spatulas outside in the first place. He had spent a fortune on sand shovels and pails for them. Stacey said she'd given them the spatula as well as a rolling pin and colander and furthermore she would continue to do so. They could have the kitchen sink if they wanted and she wished to God they would take it. Ned said he didn't want them playing with expensive stainless steel kitchen. . . ah. . . ah. . . tools. "Utensils," Stacey said. The word he groped for was "utensils." If he used them occasionally, as even Jack the jock did, he might remember the correct term. And as for perceiving he wasn't made of money, he could be absolutely certain she understood. In fact, now that he mentioned it, she wanted him to know that for three years and seven months he had nagged. Relentlessly. So that she was unable at the grocery store to decide whether to buy medium or king-sized eggs and. . . "Extra large," Ned said. The words she groped for were "extra large." Well, anyway, Stacey wanted him to know she was God-damned sick of the nagging. Well, by God, he said, someone had to nag or they'd be on skid row. Which brought to his mind the Camembert cheese. Aha, the cheese, she said. She knew it. What did he expect her to serve their friends? Slabs of Velveeta on dog biscuits? Very funny. He thought that was extremely humorous of her, but as usual she had missed the point. "As usual," she said. It was words like "as usual" that gnawed a marriage to bits. Very well, he would retract "as usual," but when would she ever get it into her head that she spent money recklessly. "Ever," she pointed out, was like "as usual." "Ever," "never," "always," "as usual," should never be used again. There, he said. She had used the word herself: "never." As a matter of fact, she used those words much more than he and the fact they annoyed her when he used them, meant that she was, *as usual*, projecting. Projecting! Christ, she couldn't stand that two-bit penny-ante psychological insight. It was glib, it was easy, it was cheap. He picked it up from the very shrink he had once labeled 'decadent Freud.' And it was remarks like *projecting* that stopped, absolutely killed any possibility of honest discussion. Well, she just might be able to fool herself into considering this honest discussion, but he, for one, was not so easily taken in. She was behaving like a ten-year-old. No, eight was perhaps more accurate, and he most certainly was not going to indulge her little tantrum a moment

longer. And as for projecting, what the hell other word was there for her put-down of Anne on the porch? "That wasn't Anne you were yelling at, kiddo. It was you! So face it and cope!"

He went to the porch and sat in a yellow butterfly chair, his back to the screen door.

Candace, aged eleven, came in and said she had only ten minutes to get to ballet at the Grange Hall and she hadn't had supper. From the porch Ned asked why Stacey hadn't seen that the children had their suppers. He was concerned about their diets. All they ever ate were Slim Jims and M & M's and they needed more greens. For sure the latest dentist bill showed it, and why didn't she. . .

Candace said she now had precisely seven minutes to get to the Grange.

The entry way of the Grange Hall smelled of sweat and urine. Mothers crowded the narrow rectangular coatroom, holding black and pink ballet slippers, and Deirdre Simpson leaned against the opened bathroom door telling Betsey Tradd how she could make a dining table Christmas tree with seven yards of green tulle and an eight-spoked umbrella, for only three dollars and fifty cents. It was the kind of work, Stacey thought, that frantic teachers gave kindergarten children on rainy days, work performed by mental patients in back wards, or by housewives.

In the main hall, seven-to nine-year-old girls took four running steps across the dusty floor, leaped, toes pointed, and thudded to the ground. "Point your toes, Cynthia," Mrs. Brown, the teacher said, "and land lightly." It was the milkweed dance. Cynthia, short, sweet, fat Cynthia, was not intended by God for the dance of the milkweeds. At the outdoor town pool, she swam like a beer barrel rolling with the ocean swells. On the floor of the Grange, she moved like a tugboat on the rocks.

"I don't know why I do this to her," Cynthia's mother said to Stacey as they watched and Stacey laughed.

"I don't know why I do it to Candace either," she said. There was something pitiful about this. She and Ned, all their friends in town, had moved to Maine, insisting they loved "the country" and then they tried as hard as they could to turn the town into suburbia. She found Candace leaning against the folded metal chairs at the far end of the cloakroom. "Candace," Stacey whispered, "Do you really like this?"

"Like what?" Candace slid a black slipper over her dirty sock.

"Dancing."

"Oh," Candace said. "Well. Yeah, sure. It's kind of fun."

"Kind of?" Stacey said. "Is that all?"

"What's wrong with that?" Candace said shaking some dirt out of her shoe. "Anyway, Jill and Betsey and Kay are in my class."

"Can't you see them some other time?" Stacey said. "That's no reason to take dancing."

"They're my best friends," Candace said.

Waiting in line to pay Mrs. Brown the forty dollars for eight lessons, Stacey saw Brett Hadley walk into the hall

and immediately voices lowered. Brett did not belong; not in town, certainly not as the wife of the new St. Regis science teacher, not with her daughter here in the pee-pee smelling Grange. She was too big-breasted, her dress was too white against her dark tanned skin with one button too many undone at the throat. Her hair was too thick and long and shiny, her voice husky. She stank of sex, and it was the men who were most critical, as if by gossip they could control their excitement and justify marriage to their more timid, proper wives. But her worst offense was that she had just been appointed personnel director of a small textile factory on Route 128 outside Boston and had her own apartment in Lynn where she lived four nights a week, commuting to Maine for weekends. "She's a very powerful woman," Bill Stoakes, headmaster of St. Regis had said to Stacey at a party that summer as they watched Brett stride across the grass. "She certainly is," Stacey had said, and then realized Bill didn't mean it as a compliment.

Brett held forty dollars in ten dollar bills, and while other mothers wrote their checks in line, or crowded around the wobbly card table, Brett passed them, dropped the money in the center of the table, nodded to Mrs. Brown and left.

On her way out, Stacey was stopped by Betsey Tradd who asked if she would run the Christmas tree and wreath committee this year for the Episcopal Church bazaar. "We're going to make umbrella tulle trees and we'll have to get working on them after Labor Day," she said. "Will you help?"

"Not 'til I have my lobotomy," Stacey said, and went out.

She had to see Stephen Baker. She drove fast to the courts, but he wasn't there. As she swung out of the parking lot, a truck honked and swerved to the center of the road to avoid her. Stacey raised her middle finger and headed back toward town. He might be eating down town, and when she saw a Honda parked in front of Tuck's Pharmacy, she stopped. Stephen wasn't in Tuck's, or Elly's Deli, and she hesitated in front of the A & P. He might be picking up food for a picnic at the beach. She walked quickly up and down the aisles, aware he could be passing behind the far end just as she turned a corner. Now, at aisle seven beside the fruit counter, she turned and went back through each aisle, almost running.

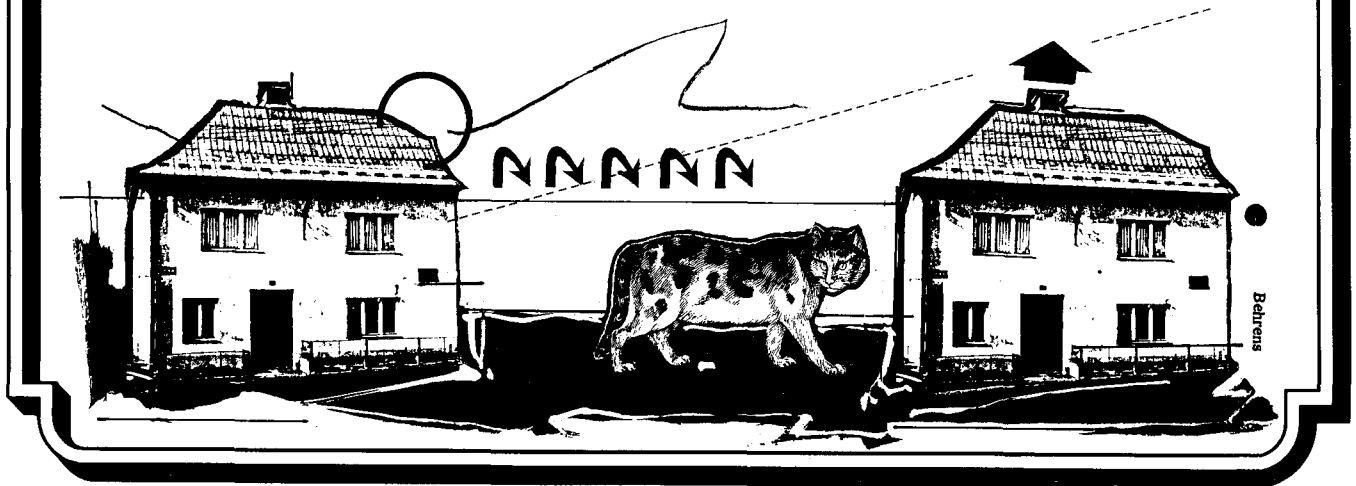
"Is the building a-fire?" It was Marie Jackson, her red wiry hair pulled back in a pony tail, holding an armful of grapefruit.

"The cereal aisle just collapsed in flames," Stacey said. "I'm sorry. I can't talk. I've got to find someone."

"Good luck," Marie said, and Stacey hurried out. On the sidewalk, she looked to the right, then left. Stephen had to be somewhere on Main Street, perhaps only fifty feet from her right now, and she began to run. He might just moments ago have stepped out of Four Corners Market and into the Deli, and she opened the heavy green door of the Deli again, but the room was empty except for Catson, the town drunk, in his shiny blue pants leaning against the red formica counter and talking with Eleanor. "All I want is to see Stephen," she told herself. "Just one look at his eyes." □

BROOKE WILEY

IN MID-WINTER



Entertainment

We have no way of knowing how many kittens will actually be born. Ned feels that she will have no more than six, no fewer than four. She is, indisputably, a very full mother. Ned has compared her bulging stomach to a Big Sur wave, but since I have never been to California, I can only imagine.

Marina tells us that the first litter is always small, that she will have four babies maximum. Maximum, Ned says questioningly, but look. He points at the cat and smiles happily at the unusual size of the stretched drum of a belly. We are all waiting.

Extravagance

In way of celebration, Marina has baked an artful three layer cake in the shape of a cat. Ned is visibly pleased. The frosting is coconut vanilla. One of your favorites, Marina sighs.

The couple from next door are invited over and someone is sent down for beer in the bottles. The couple from next door have brought their baby and a camera for the event. No one is quite sure when the kittens will be born. Still, the couple hope to get some good shots.

Since their baby is a newborn, he sleeps all afternoon in a huge basket his mother has brought along for this purpose. When the beer arrives, we leave the baby to sleep and wait impatiently for the can opener to be passed.

Solitude

There were many nights in my childhood that I did not sleep. I walked in my sleep and imagined people climbing the dark stairs. I lay awake and watched the window, waiting for the night when the cyclops would come to the second story and see me with his one substantial eye. I did not know if he would speak to me or not. I could not sleep with these thoughts.

In school, I perfected the art of cat napping. I was no scholar, but I had an imaginative mind. It is because of my childhood habits that my nights are now more active than my days. I can do most of my work while Ned sleeps.

But his belief is simply that I am a night person. He has dismissed my childhood as one I have fabricated for effect. New Mexico was not that dull, I argue. Everyone has a childhood. Ned only shakes his head.

Sanctuary and Adoption

It must have been an unfaithful love. It is clear that she has come seeking self preservation. When she sleeps well into mid-morning, I do not disturb her. She plays cards in front of the picture window facing the harbor. She occasionally whispers things to Ned and then pulls away, saying, It's true. She confides in him but says nothing to me.

It must be a man, for Ned has become the patient third party with the open heart. I know that he enjoys this role. Perhaps he feels like a father again.

Coherence

During this month of December, the harbor usually begins to freeze over. The congealing begins far into the marsh, along the finger estuaries and rivulets that normally rise and fall with the moon tides, like an animal breathing deeply as it sleeps.

As the surface freezes, the undercurrents continue to flow. On the surface, all is hard and immobile. The ice takes on a clouded color, for the salt of the ocean remains suspended.

Each day the ice creeps further into the wide open spaces. The days grow shorter. Finally the ice converges upon itself, meeting near the center of the harbor where the rip tides are the strongest. Here the ice is thin. Unlike the edges of the harbor where the ice floes have been pushed and piled into grotesque and salty statues, the ice in the center of the harbor cannot support the weight of a man.

By the end of December, the sand dunes across the harbor will appear to glisten. This happens every year when the winter has been so bitter it literally polishes the sand. In places the sand will reflect the sunlight into our windows, and Ned will probably comment, as he always does, that the dunes are dressed in diamonds.

Fantasy

Marina is thinner than I am. She owns a classic beauty, the kind that cannot be ruined. Is this what bothers me? Her hair is long. It is too straight.

My hair is kept short more for practical purposes than for aesthetic quality. Ned likes my hair short—somehow it makes us feel like pals, as I suppose we are anyway.

Marina has become attached to Ned, and I prefer to see it as a school girl crush, although she is no more than two years younger than me. She is seven years younger than Ned, who returns her smiles with those inquisitive looks of his. I have grown to realize that these expressions are creased with curiosity and fantasy.

Marriage

The couple from next door are taking their little baby home. It is time for his feeding, the mother explains, but she is too shy to breast feed him among new friends. We have known them for only a few weeks and she blushes with her apology.

Marina, they say, almost out the door, your cake was a real treat. They thank us. She smiles at me. I am sorry that they have not been rewarded with a few good shots of the kittens' birth. Ned asks if they want the flashlight, it would be no trouble. But they assure us that they already know where the path is through the field.

They step quickly out of the light of the porch, where, I imagine, they bump into one another as they feel ahead for the hedges that mark the edge of the field.

BROOKE WILEY works in Austin, Texas. This is her first published story.

Companionship

The kittens are of course born during the early morning while we sleep. I am reminded of our next door neighbors' desire to capture the experience with a few good shots. Mama Cat is almost as proud as Ned is. She allows us to hold the kittens for a moment or two. They are light and repulsive, yet when they cry it makes my heart tighten. Marina claims they have been born under the sign of Sagittarius. They will be good-natured and have loyal friends, she says, laughing. We laugh too, and stroke slowly Mama Cat's deflated stomach.

Hymn

New Bedford was the town where Ned grew up. His father was a strict man. His mother was a school teacher. Ned has told me that he was bored in high school and that is why he married Faithy. She was bored too.

After high school they lived with her parents, had a baby girl in what seemed like a very short time, and spent their next months together arguing over Ned's future. Their argument became everyone's business.

Faithy's parents thought it would be wise to work at the wool mills. If Ned showed a little initiative he could look forward to the rewards of being a foreman. The pay was good enough, wasn't it? On the other hand, Ned's parents insisted that he take courses at the Community College. A wife and a child did not necessarily limit a man to a "foreshortened" education. (They actually used this word.)

But Faithy's dream was for Ned to get onto the New Bedford Police Force, so that their status in the community would be guaranteed. Amid all the discussion of his future, Ned decided he no longer wanted to live near any of the family. This included Faithy. She had become so overbearing and impatient, that he spent many nights sleeping on his parent's porch. By the time his daughter was one and a half and beginning to put her syllables together in a creative way, Ned and Faithy had filed for a no-fault divorce. Finally he left for California with the vague intention of becoming a disc jockey in Berkeley.

Marrow

My cousin and I disagree on many issues. While Ned works in his study, we sit at the kitchen table and argue over love relationships. Marina says they are best when transient. I insist that there must be some permanence. Permanence kills the spirit, she intones. Spontaneity is smothered.

As I shell walnuts for a rich dessert I have coveted for days, I consider the benefits of impermanence. Transience, as Marina says. Surely there are benefits to familiar bodies, faces and minds. It isn't boredom at all, but I cannot find the words to explain this to her. My silence must seem like a kind of submission, so I tell her that something much finer than that initial sensation is gained through time. She looks at me and smiles slightly. Like you and Ned, she says.

Net

I am frequently drawn to the kittens. In their dark hideaway under the chest of drawers in our bedroom, they are nearly perfect. Yet they will not be complete until they open their eyes. Now they are blind. They stumble into one another, nudging and squirming in an attempt to discover where they might be.

When will their eyes open? I think of calling the veterinarian to ask questions. I wait impatiently, as I did before their birth, but somehow this wait seems more important. The experience is critical. When will they open their eyes? I ask Ned. He tells me it will be soon, and probably in the middle of the night.

Migration

Marina has left for the Christmas holidays to stay with friends in Boston. She does not mention her boyfriend. We sigh heavy breaths and give one another furtive glances. We talk about her. Ned, I ask, even though she is a lot to handle, do you love her? He says of course not, but I detect a restriction somewhere near the top of his throat. He twists at the ends of his mustache. It is too early to tell whether he is truthful or not.

We spend our nights under the quilt, catching up on the time lost to my cousin, our extended house guest. Later on as we lie not touching, the quilt flung to the bottom of the bed, Ned confides that he feels a growing attraction for Marina.

I wonder what this means and find myself staring into the bare white light bulb in the bathroom. The house remains unlit except for the bathroom that throws a slant of light across my legs. Ned strokes them up and down, going from one leg to the other. I realize that Marina has been in our home now for almost two months. I think to myself that this is a long time. I believe that if anything was going to happen, it would have taken place at a much earlier time. This is a false security, I think, as I fall asleep.

Departure

After the mid-January thaw, there will always be more of winter. We are never left alone. Still the thaw will satisfy many of us, and will serve as a means of lightening the burden of winter. Surely this is one more false security, to believe that spring is not too far in the future.

In January the tides will reach incredible heights. Summer houses close to the shoreline easily flood. A history is left behind as the waters recede. Plastic containers, rotted wood from beached wrecks, life preservers, hats, rubber thongs, and chunks of styrofoam that once cradled stereos and televisions. All find their way into bedrooms and kitchens.

Much is left behind in the dunes as well. When spring does arrive, we can always tell how high the ocean rose by

the lines of flotsam that hang from the sea grass, looking almost like the decorations on a Christmas Tree.

Focus

Because Marina will be back tomorrow, I must work today. There is no getting around this necessity. Ned has lit the gas heater for me and is probably sitting at the kitchen table reading the second draft of his book. His book that seems to be stuck on something, and so goes nowhere.

Then there is Marina. I find myself hoping that she will have a man with her when she returns, but this idea seems out of place. Ned's attraction appears to be only a form of entertainment, yet I am reminded that Faithy was much the same.

Concentration must not be wasted. I try not to think of these things while I throw pots. I try to concentrate on nothing more than the calming sensation of clay on skin. I imagine the money I will collect at the fair in August. They say this is counting your chickens before they hatch.

Indulgence

Ned was not a hard person to get to know, but he kept me at arm's length for a long time. It was five months before he told me he thought I was nice. I had professed my love in the first two weeks and given myself without reservation, although I don't think he realized this.

We met while I was still living in New Mexico. Ned was working his way back to New England from the west coast, taking odd jobs. He was an orderly in the county hospital.

When Ned had money enough to leave, I wanted to go, too. I had plans to take out the bank savings that had been put aside for my wedding. My mother did not agree with this match. She sat up and pleaded with me until all hours of the night. She lost sleep over me. When we reached Atlanta, Georgia, we sent her a postcard with alligators on one half, and bikini girls on the other. We sent her a five pound bag of pecans.

Sight

The kittens' eyes have been open for a week now, and Marina has been back for three days. Danny is the name of Marina's friend. What is in a name? I wonder. Danny. He is not what I would have expected: blond, small-boned, naturally sarcastic. I listen to them as they talk.

So this is where you've been for the last three months, he says.

I cannot see his face.

I've been relatively happy. It was nice when the kittens came. She laughs.

We are in the living room and my face is buried into the couch. I drift. They must think I am sleeping.

He says, what do they do for excitement here. How could you stay. . . .

She says, Ned and I are very close. He's working on a beautiful book.

Nothing is said for a long minute. Is Marina's Danny jealous? I am not, but don't know why. There is more silence. Are they kissing or have they left the room? Upstairs Ned is playing his guitar along with a record.

Small Discovery

Ned is withdrawn. I do not know whether his silence is a reaction to Danny's presence, or caused by a letter he received two days ago from his thirteen-year-old daughter. He will not let me read the letter and carries it in his wallet. Marina has assured us that Danny will stay only through Thursday. He is on his way to Nova Scotia.

At dinner, everything is hurried. I want to slow it down. We talk about art. Danny informs us that he is a woodcarver, hoping to open a shop somewhere along the coast with friends. Ned asks, do you have any money? Danny says he has no funds, if that is what Ned means. Marina says she admires Danny's drive. They smile at one another. This means that there has been a reconciliation. It is a small discovery.

Ned watches Marina so closely I am embarrassed. His eyes are beautiful and large. Beginning at my left, I pass the wine. Danny is arguing that great art is seldom funded. He says that money produces a commercial haze, creativity stagnates.

What do you intend to live on? Ned asks, but Danny chooses not to answer this question.

Nova Scotia is so cold now, I venture. Danny remains silent. He looks at me for a long time. I am determined not to avert my eyes. As he begins to laugh I feel the tiny hairs on the back of my neck tingle. Marina begins to laugh also, looking confused but all the same complying. With his wine glass held so gently between his fingers, Ned asks what is so funny. Marina begins to fidget. Danny, looking at us with such visible contempt, informs us that we are not artists at all. We are merely craftsmen. We produce only for the money, which is far from creating. Marina says, Danny.

Ned has put his wine glass down and is standing over the table. I have never seen him lose his temper, I think over and over again.

Leave, he says quietly.

It is no big deal. He is staring full faced at Danny. Marina's eyes, I see, are pleading with Ned.

Why so touchy? Danny says. For Christ's sake. He strides from the kitchen into the dimly lit living room. Marina murmurs, Damn it, Ned, as she leaves to comfort her friend. This surprises me. I am left to comfort Ned who is by now literally throwing dinner dishes into the sink, one by one.

Hibernation

February is the intolerable month. There are no clear days, no windless nights. No one goes out. We dream of

sleeping all month, only to wake to the possibilities of March. We work and forget what the color of the ocean looks like. The sound of the sea ice breaking and piling is like gunshots or groaning. We are reminded of dying. We count the number of winter storms since December. We read the Farmer's Almanac and half believe the predictions of an endless cold. We think ahead to the possibilities of March, even though January is only half spent.

Acquiescence

It is after the argument at dinner that I come to the realization that Ned's curiosity is indeed evolving into love. He has been slowly and deliberately courting Marina, although I wonder how much is really necessary. Danny has left. I am the only obstruction. I feel like a spy.

To become possessive at this point, after five years of a fine relationship, seems juvenile. Yet I have trouble accepting the fact that Ned is, in the fullest sense, his own person.

I tell him this while we are in bed, knowing that this is when he is his most vulnerable. I ask him not to sleep with her, for my sake. I know this is ridiculous. I try to put myself in his place, as he asks me to, but cannot.

I ask what the attraction is, other than the obvious beauty and spider-allure she plays with so well. He tells me there is no attraction other than her beauty. We end up agreeing that that quality is certainly an asset.

Fantasy # 2

Nova Scotia sounds like a nice place, Marina explains. She seems wistful, dreamy. She asks if she may borrow fifty dollars, she will pay me back as soon as she finds a job. A job? I ask. I must look suprised.

I am going to Nova Scotia to stay with Danny. He asked me in a letter. She shrugs, but remains lovely and uncomplicated looking. I wonder if Ned knows of her decision. I think he probably does.

I wonder if it is this uncomplicated look Marina wears that is so attractive to Ned.

Crow's Nest

The kittens are six weeks old today. Ned and I celebrate with Molson's Ale and freshly baked bread. We are careful not to get the crumbs all over the bed.

The kittens are ready to leave us. Tomorrow I will tack up signs in the Post Office and the Super Market. Free kittens to good homes, Ned says and laughs. We are lying crosswise on the bed, with bread and butter on a plate between us.

We have heard no news from Marina, and Ned thinks we probably won't until she simply drops by for another visit. I tell him it would be typical. I try to imitate that uncomplicated look of hers, hoping that he will realize I am joking, and not really serious at all. □

A RUNNING CONVERSATION • ROBERTA ISRAELOFF



Pardon me for looking," said my mother, "but I couldn't help but notice on my way to the bathroom last night how you sat kissing what's his name with your hands folded on your lap like a schoolgirl. What a cold fish you turned out to be." We put down our coffee cups and glared at each other across the breakfast table. I reached for a cigarette. "You shouldn't smoke," said my mother.

From the apartment next door came soft waking sounds. As I puffed they laughed, stretched, tickled, threw water over each other, who knows what—"Live it up," advised my mother. I think they heard her.

"Some what's his name," I continued not so sweetly. "You know damn well who that was." Roommates have no secrets and that's what we were, roommates, ever since an evening two months ago when she showed up on my doorstep in a characteristic coup of perfect timing—as if for the past six years she had done nothing but calculate the time between the first, careful winding of the mechanism which propelled me through college and two years of a dreary city job, and its first signs of faltering. I'm tired of living alone, she had pleaded, weariness hanging from her shoulders with her handbag. Come on home. So I gave in, for her sake, and together we co-authored shopping lists, draw chore wheels, negotiate territory, barter for privacy.

"I wish you knew who he was. Mr. Right or Wrong."

"Not that you're one to talk," I commented, "and anyway what's your rush? Just because Michael and I are waiting, trying to be cautious and responsible about this decision, our decision..."

"Dump him for all I care. You're not the passionate type. By the way, what time did you get in last night?"

"Oh God, Mother."

"Sorry, a momentary slip, sometimes you just say things without thinking." She shrugged, as if to say, Forgive these vestigial concerns I'm trying to shed like skin. Then she sat down on the floor and began her exercises: touch toes up stretch, touch toes up stretch;

slipping, as if from a bath, out of the reflexes of motherhood into the demands of her black leotard. This ease sat suspiciously with me. Did she think I was fooled? That I could forget the years during which I was the prime moving target of her maternalism, the very militancy of which, I had always assumed, drove Dad to dump the trash one night eight years ago and never return?

"You're always rushing me," I prompted. "Always a step ahead; on the average, by about three years. You explained menstruation too early, before I had any idea what you were talking about. You even accused me of losing my virginity a year before I really did."

"Don't blame me, pant pant, blame the PTA. Blame Masters and Johnson, pant pant. They made me aware of teenage sex. How was I supposed to know then pant pant that you'd be such a cold fish. You never talked to me."

I drew in breath to commence a new attack but she suddenly stopped moving, and sat up on the floor, Indian style. "I know what you're thinking, you're worried about making the same mistake you think I made with your father. But I'm thinking it wasn't so much a mistake as mutual dishonesty. Too much caution leads to flab. God knows where he found the guts to leave with the coffee grounds that night but it's done this family a world of good. Except for you. You look terrible." She stood and examined me with the scrutiny I deserved. "Come over to the mirror," she commanded.

We compared my hollow cheeks, wan pallor, limp hair and blue nails to her own suit of perfect health which she sported for the first time in her adult life as naturally as her hairdo. "Come to the gym with me today," she said. She went every day, before dinner, and peppered our meal-time conversation with triumphs: Four times around the track, or Three hundred yards in the pool. She asked again, with genuine concern, "Why won't you try coming with me today?"

"Mother, is that your answer to everything?"

"You'll feel better, you'll see. Once around the track. Trust me."

The wrong entreaty. "Forget it, I have more important things to think about. Like Michael. Like how much longer I can live here with you."

ROBERTA ISRAELOFF teaches in New York City. This is her first published story.

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Moscow Art Theatre!*

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An Approximately Normal Person

From Features of America

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Photograph by Mark Mittelman

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Four Interesting Trees and what their bark foretold

by Daniel Asa Rose
Illustrated by Eve Vaterlaus

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The CORK Cartoon



from Features of America

An Approximately Normal Person

Overall, she was a regular girl. Besides the fact that she got furiously cautious at times, she was like the rest of us. The errors which allow despair, the aftertastes of tiny bitterness, the gradual dullness of a dinner—these were the things of her life. She still felt it virtually impossible for a single lady to travel without injury to her character. So she sat in the park, looking like a woman who seldom cringed and never had bad creditors. All was comfortable, except for the occasional unsettling—like the thump of a great apple on her lap. These special moments she would treat with a protective tenderness as if she could carry the wings home and to her friends, without ever altering their colors.

Overall, she knew we are all deceiving ourselves. But this didn't advise her to shut both eyes with a slanted blink. Instead, she took those special moments as a sample flight to travel further on, transforming amazement into admiration, tallying the molecules of a daily ritual into a generous example of consistency. By this she considered herself the proof or illusion of stability. And thus, with the appropriate companions to provide guidance, she began to write. And like a carpenter trying to catch each exact angle, her words were being extracted wonderfully pure:

"The following are the ten periods when a bird has the greatest chance of becoming poetic: 1) when the observer is tired of walking, or exhausted with other bodily exercises; 2) after the observer has waited a long time for intercourse; 3) a month after childbirth; 4) during the earlier stages of pregnancy; 5) when the observer is idle, anxious, dull, or intellectual; 6) if recently cured of foot ailments; 7) when showing signs of bashfulness; 8) when feeling gay; 9) after the loss of virginity; 10) during thunder, lightning, or warm rain. These are the times when a bird has the greatest chance of becoming poetic."

— Bruce Piasecki

— photo by Mark Mittelman

Four Interesting Trees

and what their bark foretold

1. The Harkengrove Willow

A weeping willow on the estate of Dame Harkengrove in Tewkesbury was a brilliant and lively willow who could do most nearly anything and yet did nothing remarkably well. She could sing rather nicely, could use a pistol and ride to hounds as few weeping willows can, and yet for all her talents the Harkengrove Willow at the end could look back over her life and point with pride to nothing.

As the eldest willow in Dame Harkengrove's estate, she had an exalted position in a very pleasant lawn. However, she started going off in those fast cars, dribbled away her inheritance, made a mess of her marriage, and hardly ever returned her phone calls.

I reproduce her bark (fig. 1) as an example of a Life-Line which appears perfectly fine in its early stage, but about the middle of the trunk crosses over and finishes on the Mount of Saturn, an indisputably ominous indication on any bark, not to mention unattractive.

Other markings for the student to note are the general droop of the Heart-Line, the listless Line of Marriage, and the Line of Head which terminates in a knot, indicating mental brilliance—but the obnoxious sort.

The Harkengrove Willow had a scintillating personality, she was a charming hostess, and yet at her funeral were far fewer mourners than hecklers. In studying her bark, it is well to bear in mind that the most popular trees invariably have bark lines that are straight and true and that are not criss-crossed by lots of junk.

Fig. 1

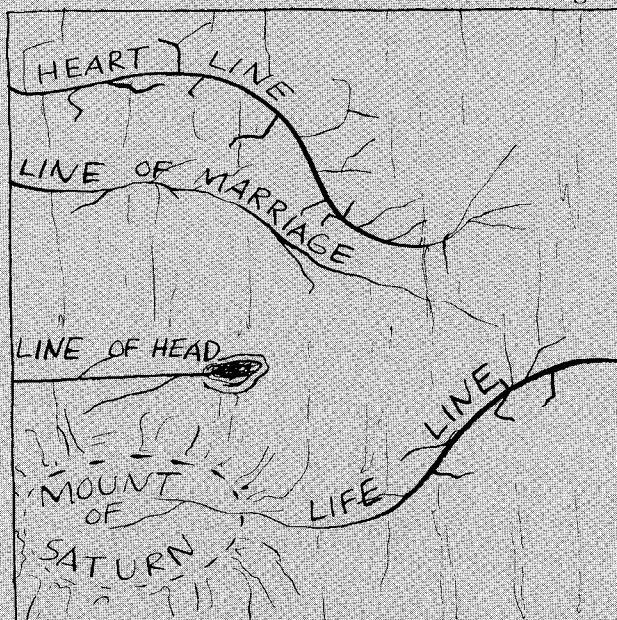
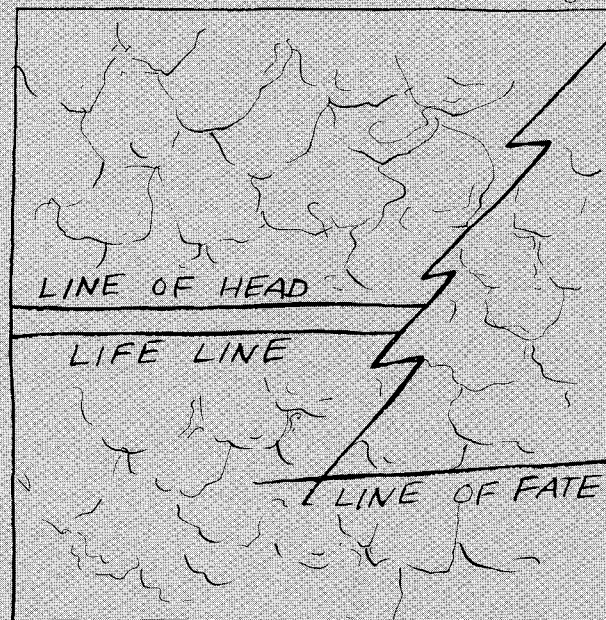


Fig. 2



2. Potted Palm

The bark of Potted Palm, one of England's great business trees, under whose spreading leaves in the Broad Street Dining Club were conducted some of the century's biggest banking transactions, is a good example of "the business bark."

It is the stable type (fig. 2) with impressively deep, somber lines and a level Line of Head, closely allied to the Life-Line. Potted Palm was a stable tree and slow to anger: he was known for his reserve, but at the same time he could shout you right out of the billiard room.

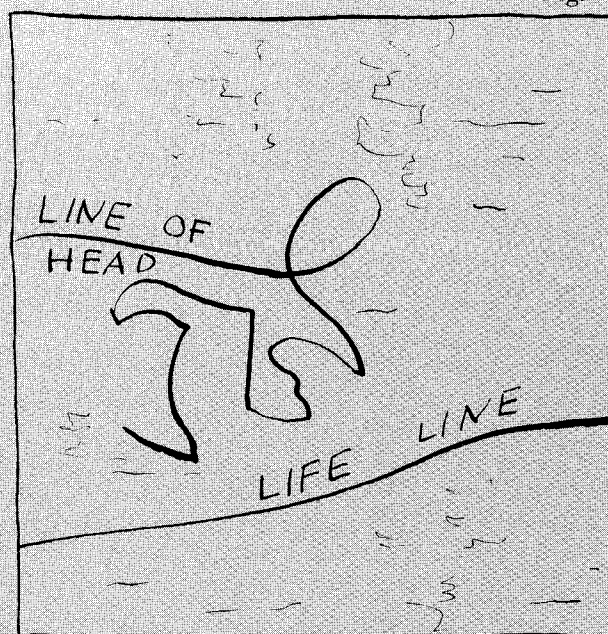
There is one line that looks remarkably like a lightning bolt which intercepts the Line of Fate precisely at its mid-point. Such a line is never seen unless it be evidence of something horrible.

When I took the impression of his bark, I warned Potted Palm of an impending catastrophe.

Very calmly he asked: "When will this event come to pass?"

Donning my cape I replied: "In seven or eight minutes from now."

Seven minutes later the Broad Street Dining Club was bombed to smithereens during the midst of a stockholders' lunch.



3. *Sweet Gum, the American film goddess*

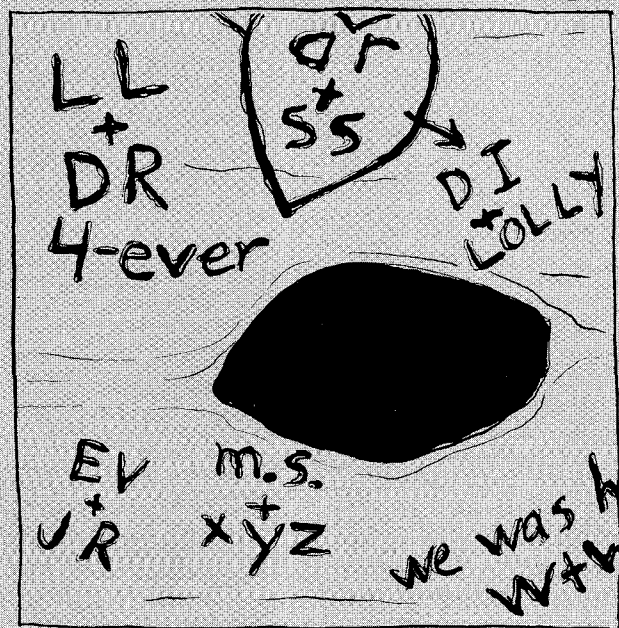
For all the world, Sweet Gum was a happy and vivacious film goddess—never lonely, never blue. She had fame and fortune and all the marks of a life lived before an adoring public. But one glance at her bark proved to me what only her closest friends suspected, and none dared mention: there was a well of emptiness midst the gaiety (fig. 3).

Deep insecurities, a desperate need to be loved, a nasty case of beetle rot—this was the sad truth behind the glittering legend of Sweet Gum. Again and again she consulted me, and each time her future looked worse. I begged her to take care of herself, but always there was something in her mysterious half-smile that made me wonder: “Does she *truly* believe?”

Shortly before she was found washed ashore at Malibu, Sweet Gum paid me a final visit in my private salon above Madame Tussaud’s on Grosvenor Street. Recorded in my Guest Book from that visit is this tragical inscription:

“Maestro, you’re a scream!!!”
“Sweet Gum.”

Fig. 3



4. *The bark of a certified flasher*

I obtained the impression of Professor Birchwood’s bark (fig. 4) when he was a sapling of three months old.

And such a strange-looking bark! Pale and flaky, with hardly a mark of any kind, except for a tell-tale Line of Head that doubled over on itself at the midpoint and became real ugly.

“Mr. and Mrs. Birchwood,” I told his parents as they relaxed in the elegant comfort of my private salon, “you are dandling on your knee a tree who begins life in a normal, uneventful fashion. He wins the usual scholastic honors and at age 24 is awarded a stipend at Paisley College, Oxford. However, the rigors of academic life soon prove too much for him, with the result that by his late 20’s he is experimenting with pine cones, consorting with driftwood, and finally . . . becoming a flasher!”

The gasp that escaped the lips of little Professor Birchwood’s parents, as they sat that day in my cozy salon, with its crackling fireplace and free unlimited cordials, was not an easy gasp to live with, as gasps go. In fact, over the years it haunted me. Could I have been mistaken? Worse yet, could I have been wrong? The remote possibility that I had given them groundless cause to suffer—for all those years!—put an ache in my heart.

Early one evening last spring, an evening when I was seeking to assuage the ache in my heart with an after-dinner stroll, I was stepping through Kensington Alleyways when I heard the unmistakable sound of a tree dragging itself along behind me. The air was cool, the moon was bright, and the terror mounted inside of me. Could it have been one of the Chestnut Brothers against whom I’d testified, so long ago? I dared not look around. I could not breathe or think, as the dragging grew quicker, as the dragging grew closer. At last there was a tug upon my shoulder. Trembling I turned, and in a flurry of leaves beheld the grisliest, most disgusting sight ever beheld in Kensington Alleyways.

Hoorah! And thank God the Birchwoods had not suffered in vain.

—Daniel Asa Rose

THE THREE SIBLINGS

or Boyar Blues

by Mark Halliday

ACT I

Katya: (rocking in the rocking chair in the far corner of the drawing room) Sometimes in the summer you hear dogs barking in the distance and you feel the wildness of everything—it comes over you—

Pochtev: (entering and calling to Golya) You know I'd love to have one of your biscuits, but surely not without something to drink! You must be joking!

Golya: Oh, you think everything is a joke, Stepan Stepanovitch Pochtev! Someday the devil will come and find you laughing and send his black flies right into your mouth.

Pochtev: Black flies? The devil?

Golya: Right into your mouth!

Pochtev: Not without a beverage, surely. (He wanders over to the davenport and takes out his snuffbox.)

Kutolgik: (entering with a load of firewood) Where shall I put these logs, Samara?

Golya: Samara isn't here, you mad boy. Put them in the pantry, and don't plague us with questions, I have such a stomach-ache.

Pochtev: An ache? An ache? Is it the grippe?

Kutolgik: Is it the ague?

Pochtev: Is it the consumption?

Kutolgik: Is it a form of death-in-life?

Pochtev: Is it an earthquake, or merely a shock?

Golya: (falling on the divan) Oh, I don't know, I don't know. I wish I knew, I wish I knew. I only know there's nothing here for me, nothing in this wide world left for me to see.

Pochtev: Come, that's going too far, surely. There's Kiev, and there's a number of quaint villages in the Ukraine . . .

Kutolgik: (gazing out the window at the setting sun) Yes, and every village has its *mir* . . . One *mir* to a village. It's something to think about.

Golya: (somewhat revived) Oh, Kutolgik, you make me laugh. Ha, ha! You, who are a mere student of philosophy at the local branch of a second-echelon university, you, who play the fiddle indifferently and munch black bread and forget to shave! You, who have holes in your muddy boots and an annoying yellowish tinge to your leggings—ach! Hagh! You truly make me laugh. Do you ever!

Kutolgik: (unruffled) Well, Golya, if my character can make you forget your stomach-ache, perhaps all is for the best.

Pochtev: But that's going a bit far, surely. If *all* is for the best—that is to say, *all* . . .

Kutolgik: Yes?

Pochtev: (tapping his pipe vigorously to cover his confusion) Ehhh . . . I had a thing to say; but let it pass.

(A silence falls. Kutolgik returns to the window and rubs his nose against the pane.)

Katya: (still rocking) Just at twilight—only for an instant, like the diamond gleam of a teardrop in one's eye before it falls and spreads like common perspiration on one's cheek—there is a kind of hush all over the world, then, and one begins to wonder—why are we here?

(There is a pause, during which all the characters stand rigidly staring at Katya.)

Golya: Ohhhh . . . (She faints.)

CURTAIN

ACT II

(Two hours later; the same people are present. Golya is fanning herself with a volume of Pushkin. Pochtev is asleep on the davenport. Kutolgik is stacking the firewood in the pantry, trying to create a perfect pyramid. Katya is still rocking.)

Samara: (entering from the kitchen) Kolya? Kolya? (She sees Katya.) Ah, there you are, my little Kolya. Are you happy, dear sister? (Katya does not answer.) Kolya, speak to me, speak to your sister. Are you happy? Do you have a *raison d'être*? Kolya?

Katya: Samara? (Katya gazes vacantly around the room as if in a trance.)

Golya: Samara is not here, foolish child.

Samara: Golya, how can you say something so careless? I am here. I am here now.

Golya: Samara? Here now?

Katya: Samara?

Golya: Oh, Samara, Samara—I would have sworn you were there then. But you're here, now—

Samara: Yes, good sibling, I assure you . . . But what of sweet Kolya? Is she—as before?

Golya: Yes. (grimly) At least.

Samara: (taking Katya's hands in her own) Kolya, my dear . . .

Katya: Samara? Is it you?

Samara: Yes, oh yes. And you are my sweet Kolya.

Katya: I am Katya.

Samara: Yes, but I call you Kolya.

Katya: I? Kolya?

Samara: Yes, ever since you were a tiny infant, you have been Kolya to me. It is one of our Russian nicknames.

Katya: I am Katya to the world, but Kolya to you.

Samara: (crying softly) Oh, Kolya, Kolya . . .

Golya: Dinner! We must eat, or we shall all die! Up! Up, everyone! Food!

Pochtev: (waking with a start) Hanh? But yes! If it is the Czar's bidding—

Golya: Hush, Pochtev, you will bring the militia.

Samara: Speaking of which, I have exciting news—

Pochtev: Samara? Are you here?

Golya: We've already been through that.

Pochtev: Samara, listen to me. I am not an old man. I am perhaps in my mid-fifties, but I can still hit a croquet ball with vigor, and young ladies in the courtroom still swoon when I present my briefs. Hear me out, good Samara. I have watched over you since you were a mere pudding in the cradle, and I was a plum-checked lad of twenty with twigs in his hair. I can remember you struggling with my name before you could walk—'Stepaw Stepanowish,' you called me—and in those syllables I read the purity of your simple heart . . .

Golya: You are babbling, Stepan Stepanovitch Pochtev. Come along and help me lay the cutlery, and I'll give you that biscuit I promised.

Pochtev: Wait, wait. I must finish my thought, or it may vanish forever. Samara—you yourself are beyond the first blush of youth. It is time for you to marry, and bring forth children who will possess your grace, your poise and so forth . . . Oh, Samara, dinner is ready, so I beg you, let me be terse—the thrust is this: Will you be my bride? Shall we bind together our joys and hopes for better or for worse?

Samara: (crying) Everything happens so fast, how can we know which way to turn? Our mother is no longer with us to point the way, and we have no spare rubles . . . Not to mention kopecks . . . Hesitation is costly . . .

Pochtev: (stumbling toward her) My dear, my dear, you won't regret this—

Golya: (coming between them) But your news, Samara, your news!

Samara: Yes, yes, I had almost forgot. Kolya! My little Kolya.

Golya: (to Katya) She means you.

Katya: I am here. The sun is down now, and the light is gone, from the lakes, from the hills, from the skies.

Samara: Kolya, do you remember that gallant Captain of Militia who danced with you at the ball last All-Saints Day? Captain Zabaikin?

Katya: Zabaikan? Zubeakun?

Samara: You do remember! Of course, I knew you would, when you danced he held you tight, and then he walked you home that night . . .

Katya: And all the stars were shinin' bright—

Samara: And then he kissed you!

Katya: Only on the cheek. With lips like dew.

Kutolgik: (looking up from his logs) Like dew?

Golya: But Samara, don't tease the girl, you see how pale she is.

Samara: My tidings may bring the rose back into those moony cheeks! Kolya, the Captain is coming to dinner tonight!

Katya: Tonight?

Golya: To dinner?

Pochtev: Here?

Kutolgik: Why?

Samara: Yes, yes, yes. I chanced to meet him at the station—his brigade has been transferred here! And oh, Kolya, he spoke of you with such a look in his eye.

Pochtev: Love is like a vast invisible broom, it sweeps us away. How its bristles do sting.

Golya: Quickly, quickly! (crying with joy) All must be in readiness when the Captain arrives. To the table! Samara, check the borscht. Kutolgik, will you pour the wine? And tuck in that frock!

CURTAIN

ACT III

(Samara and Golya enter the empty drawing room after dinner.)

Samara: Well, my sibling, can you read his gaze?

Golya: I am certain that he loves her. But can he support her on a Captain's pay? Oh, Samara, how cruel it was of father to die twelve years ago and leave us to our own devices.

Samara: But he had no choice, dear Golya. It was the grippe, or ague.

Golya: I don't care! We are too young and too pretty to be cast adrift on the shoals of this harsh land where the rule is sink or swim. And we are too well-bred to be comfortable with overwhelming questions such as the purpose of life. God, God. I must sit down.

Samara: Sit, sit.

Golya: (sitting in the red armchair) This was Father's armchair. His powerful elbows rested here, and here, till the very day he died . . . Thirteen years ago . . .

Samara: Twelve, actually.

Golya: Whatever. How swiftly the seasons have passed. (pulling herself together) Well, in any event, now Katya may be saved.

Samara: Who?

Golya: Kolya. You know. Our sister. How wonderful for her. Just think how strange she has been lately . . . Sitting up all night . . .

Samara: Yes. She never stopped rocking, till the moon went down.

Golya: And you, Samara, you will have Pochtev. But who will love poor Golya? (She sobs.)

Samara: You have your needlepoint.

Golya: That's true. I hadn't thought of it that way.

Samara: Such elegant needlepoint.

Golya: Do you really think so?

Samara: *Plus ou moins.*

Golya: Hush! They're coming.

Zabaikin: (entering, with Katya on his arm) Believe me, my little fish. My word is my bond.

Kutolgik: (following them in) Fish?

Katya: Oh, Zab—what can I say—I feel my head is riding some enchanted carousel—the painted ponies go up and down, and time waits for no one . . . I shall give you my answer tomorrow.

Zabaikin: Until tomorrow, then! (He salutes, and marches out of the room; he returns for his hat, then exits again.)

Golya: Katya, you crazy little bird, how can you waver? How can you shrink?

Samara: In truth, dear Kolya, he is a good man. A brave man. Not a rich man, but his income is steady, and his boots are clean—and you're the best thing that he's ever seen—

Katya: Stop! Stop, both of you! Can't you see my soul is in torment? Leave me alone—please, I beg you, leave me to my thoughts. Soon you will know my mind.

Samara: All right. (exiting with Golya) Kutolgik, you must come too.

Kutolgik: Er . . . Yes . . . Er . . . As soon as I find my pipe.

Katya: I didn't know you smoked.

Kutolgik: I don't.

Katya: For a moment, I thought your famous idealism had developed a chink.

Kutolgik: Chink?

Katya: Those dogs—again I hear them in the distance. Why must my heart flutter like a hummingbird, or a moth trapped in some bear's ear?

Kutolgik: Katya . . . There is something I must tell you—now or never . . . (He kneels before her.)

Katya:—I love you. I have loved you for years, in silence.

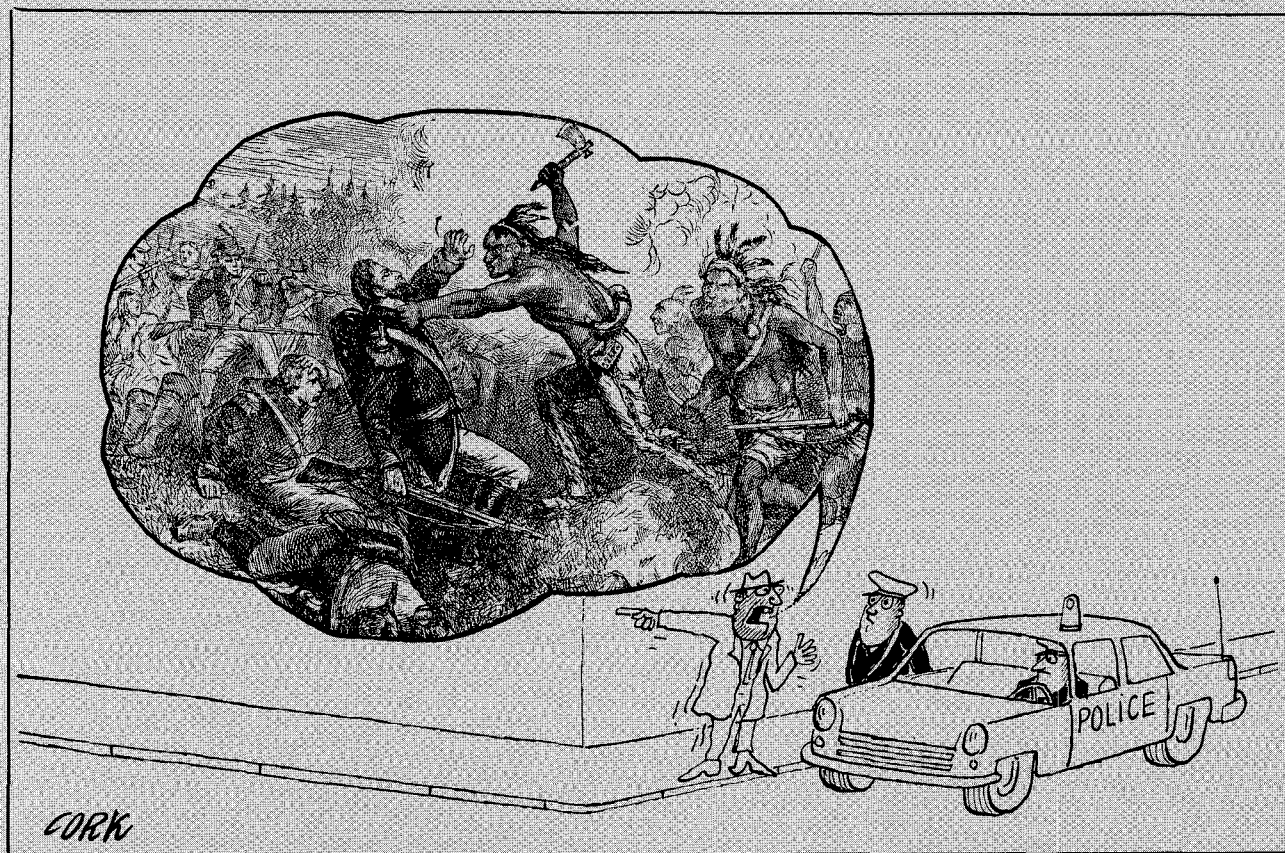
Katya: But Kutolgik—how can this be so? We have said so little to each other; indeed, there has been no significant interaction between our characters at any time . . . How can you love a stranger?

Kutolgik: Sometimes a fellow just knows things. Katya, do not marry the Captain. He is a spokesman for a dying order, he is obsolete, he will go bald. I am full of the new western ideas, and hairy. Come away with me to Moscow, and you can hold my candle while I pore over my books all night. And some day—some day, Katya—

(He stops, seeing that she is not listening. Katya goes to the window. Long silence.)

Katya: All the stars were shinin' bright . . . (long silence) But, finally, it is a question of rubles.

CURTAIN



"Oh stay as long as you like," she said, washing the dishes. "I appreciate the company."

"Well how much do you think Michael appreciates the company, every week when he comes over for a cozy dinner just for three?"

"I have no idea what Michael thinks about anything; he just may be the quietest young man I've ever met. Me, I like them talkative," she went on, flexing her hamstrings, tendons, ligaments, whatever. "Anyway tonight you'll be spared some embarrassment because I have a date." I tried to ignore her. "You'll never guess."

"Mr. Right or Mr. Wrong?" I asked, calmly pushing a dust rag across the TV.

"Your father." She moved a vase out of my way and set it on the floor. "Oh, it's not the first time he's called, he's been checking in regularly all these years, collect, but this time I accepted the charges and said, You seem to be heading east. Why not come home?"

"So this explains the kooky things you've been doing," I said slowly, "like moving vases, turning tables diagonally." One day I had found her wearing two different shoes, modeling her wedding dress; all this interfering with my search for stability. "And I thought it was menopause."

"Don't be fresh," said my mother, walking across the room to move a plant. "Nothing major, fine alterations spur awareness."

"Dinner will be very awkward," I stammered, at a loss for something better to say. I tried conjuring the picture of the man who, once a year, would mail me a birthday postcard. He never forgot the date, but as the postmark grew more exotic, his calculation of my age slipped by one, two, even four years.

"Let him help you decide," my mother was saying, "talk to him, he's a changed man, I can smell it. Calmer. More worldly. Lord knows what he's been up to all these years but he's more present. The kind of father every girl needs."

"You'd take him back?" I asked, "you, with all your freedom and exercises and black negligees? You believe him? After all this time?"

"You," she yelled, "what do you know, a kid. You can't even decide between a job in the midwest and marrying what's his name."

"Mother, why can't you tune in to the particularities of my life?"

"Because it's not the particulars that count," she snapped, "God, aren't you old enough to see that? It's the sweeping, general things. Decide what's important; companionship, career, whatever. Then flesh in the blanks with names and faces."

"It's all I ever think about, my mind goes in circles."

"Then you think too much. Take a break and let your body decide. Come to the gym with me," she whispered, her voice twisting like a scarf, blending her most seductive and motherly tones into a song I'd never heard. Her transformations were too sleek to keep up with, she beckoned to me from every direction; mother, teacher, coach, friend.

"Forget it, let's talk about dinner. What will we cook tonight for our beaux?" She gestured me to the table for a

conspiratory huddle; this woman in black, face flushed and vibrant from the exercise, this director of a dance studio, gourmet of young girls, mistress of the slight and silken. Contemplating the purchase of tomatoes her cheeks reddened; carrots, her body invisibly lengthened; peppers, her eyes grew spicy. Granny apples, I added to our list. Red Delicious, she substituted.

"Come clean, Julia," she said, leaning back in her chair. "You're trying to get a rise from me. At least give me a hint."

What I needed to know was how she saw it, this chameleon mother, shifting in and out of definition. If she was one hundred percent certain when she got married, or only ninety-nine. But I took too long to answer; she had popped into the shower, singing, and I swept dust from under the couch.

Confronting her as she stepped from the bathroom, hand on the towel wrapped around her midsection, I cried, "Mom, I don't know what to do about Michael. About joining the matrimonial circus."

Mom shook with a laughter that set off all kinds of reactions—her towel opened, I began to cough, she continued laughing, we collapsed on the couch. I felt steam rising from her skin. "You're a funny kid," she said. "All my life I've been a talker and you're a watcher. But the only way to learn is by doing. Mother duck and duckling. Julia, come to the gym with me. Trust me. I learned something there. You will too."

"Mother," I said kindly, as if talking to a child, taking her eager face in my hands, "I am talking about marriage and you are talking about muscle."

She put her hands upon mine on her face and said, "Julia, here's a terrible secret. Passion, like muscle, it has to be developed. Acquired, like emotional weight lifting."

I knew this was more than a gesture; she anchored my hands on her face, held them tightly. I looked into those eyes and kept my mouth shut. Until I sighed, "I haven't exercised in years."

My mother greeted the man who stood behind a wired partition, handing out towels and socks. In the locker room, pungent steamy heat, hair driers and wads of wet hair on the floor made me uncomfortable but the inhabitants, full of motion, and the crisp, resonating language of perpetual activity intimidated me into near paralysis. At Mom's direction we undressed and donned shorts, gray shirts, socks with heels reaching our ankles, and sneakers.

I followed her through the maze, back to the smiling man still in the cage, dumping towels in tremendous washing machines. "That your momma?" he asked me.

"Sure is." He broke into a huge smile.

"She's a regular customer here, one of the best." Mother winked at him; we continued through several doors and finally found ourselves out on the track.

"Come on," Mom said, wasting no time. "A lovely day, and no wind. Start stretching your legs, like this." On

the soft gray turf, I smelled the grass and the human smells, mingling, making the hair on my legs bristle.

"Not so fast," I balked, heart already thumping. "You just want to show off."

"OK, sorry, whenever you're ready. We'll go slow." Simultaneously we broke into a jog. Mom let me run on the inside. "Move your arms," she said, "don't let your body get stiff." We were rounding the first curve. "Let your head go, you look like a statue"—that was her next suggestion. She was only a step or two ahead of me. I took a deep breath. "Breathe quickly, short breaths," she advised. "Whenever you need to."

"There's a cramp in my side."

"You're not breathing enough. Get a rhythm established." The muscles in her legs bulged enviably and gave a bounce to her stride. "How're you doing?"

"Fine," I said, sucking breath. "My ankles hurt a bit."

"You have to land on your toes." Her shoulders were wing-like, propelling her forward. Her feet struck the turf with a resounding ping. We rounded the second turn.

"The last time I ran was in eighth grade," I reported. "I nearly died. They made us wear our coats—"

"Don't talk if it hurts," Mom said. "Keep your mouth closed or you'll dry out your throat. I can hear you gasping. Just nod yes or no. You OK?"

We began the second lap, the wind working hardest against that first curve. If I closed my eyes I could feel my body move in some kind of harmony. Mom's shirt was marked by a thin line of sweat running down the crevice in her back. I felt wetness around my thighs, in my crotch; a faint excitement to this running. My heart was racing; not one bodily function seemed normal, but somehow, from somewhere, came the craziest notion—"I feel like I could go on and on." These words forced my mouth open like a crowbar and open it stayed. I couldn't expel enough air.

Mom laughed. "It's the second wind, great, no?" I nodded. Talking took too much out of that furious machine, my body. She sensed a slowing up on my part as we crossed our starting point for the second time. "Come on," she insisted, "keep up. Amuse yourself, think of something as a distraction." My legs felt like spindles, sweat glued my clenched fists together. We faced the curve against the wind. I had already been here twice. Been here twice been here twice. Every thought had its repetition.

"I can't," I began.

"Don't talk," Mom yelled. "Listen to your blood."

I listened until we reached once again our starting point. "I can't, I can't—" my chest throbbed, the wetness in my pants was spreading.

"Once more. Once more." Once more. I knew my legs were moving but I felt stationary. Mom's face was red, her hair shining. "Think of—getting—home." Neither of us spoke the rest of the way; our nostrils flared wide as horses' nostrils. I strained to hear her shouted instructions but all I heard was our deep sucking for breath. On the last leg of the fourth lap Mom slowly pulled ahead and I felt like I was running backwards. When I finally crossed our finish line, she was there, talking again, smiling; "Don't stop, you have to keep walking."

"You're crazy—" I had to sit down. My ribs were bursting from too much breath, yet I spasmodically sucked for more air. She took my hand and we pranced with our bulging calves and steamy red thighs in tiny circles near the track. Mom's wind came back before mine.

"There, you ran a mile. And you look bloody healthy. Color in those cheeks. Animation. You may be a bit sore tomorrow, but it will never be this hard again."

What a promise. I placed a hot kiss on her cheek. Whoever she was, few were as generous. "Come on," she said, putting her arm around my damp back.

In the locker room we stripped and put on bathing suits. Mom led the way to the sauna. Once on the hot dark wood, she closed her eyes and breathed deeply; me too. I touched my skin, waiting for a change to surface, a bulging knot of muscle to appear. "I feel like I've grown a new body inside this one from all the oxygen."

"Shh," Mom said. "No one likes to be disturbed in the sauna." From the showers outside of the wooden den came giggles, whispers, splashing. "Damn," said Mom. The door creaked open and two people walked in, sat together couple-close. "You two are going to get a lot hotter faster that way," Mom advised. "Why not separate and get your money's worth?" They looked at her with awkward smiles. "Your father and I used to take saunas together," she whispered to me unprivately. "During college. We recognized the importance of exercise. Well, the years pass, you get flabby, stop caring. He saw the signs first, your father did, but couldn't change. That part was up to me. He's always been my inspiration, you'll see."

But I saw nothing, my eyes swam all over my face. The neuter wet wooden smell of the sauna blinded me, all the breath I had inhaled was reappearing as a slick film all over my body. "Enough for today," Mom declared, leading me out. If not for her steadying hand I would have blacked out in the rush of cool air—she pushed me instead into a freezing shower. I had never before felt so much body, every inch of it pulsating with solid sensation.

We showered, shampooed, powdered, sprayed, put on clean clothes. Mom took her time. "Meet you outside," I yelled, but instead I let myself become lured by the mirrors, scales, driers, and tiles down the aisles of this foreign country. Naked bodies were everywhere, all damp, white-assed, moving, exuding a smell of exertion, an anticosmetic scent of what bodies were. I drank all this woman's humidity. Then, I heard Mom's voice ringing from the shower room.

"Yes, that's my girl, we run together. What a job to get her out of the house." College, Ohio, young man; all this garbled in the throes of echo. Someone turned off the water. "She came to live with me, for a while. Just till she gets back on her feet. Give her credit, it's not an easy thing to admit these days, that you need your mother."

I met her back at her locker, watched her arrange her bottles; then we waved goodbye to the man in the cage and met the slowly darkening afternoon. "Mother," I began calmly, "you shouldn't talk in the shower. It echoes."

"Julia," she said, "as I see it, we could be kind to each

other. Your demand for the particular, it's not kind."

She was right. With a buoyant relief, I realized I no longer cared who had moved where for whose sake. I took her hand, squeezed it.

"I know what you mean," she said softly, "but we have chicken to cook." And tables to set, drinks to pour, flowers to cut, carrots to marinate, lights to dim and miles to go before we eat.

Dad came first, a thinner, ruddier father than I remembered. We hadn't seen each other in almost a year, since a frenzied airport meeting when his plane to somewhere was delayed just long enough for both of us to bite off all our nails. Tonight, pretending it had only been weeks, he kissed me and took my hand with ease. Mother waltzed out of the kitchen, tray in hand; "Ken," she said, and in that moment, I swear, in that moment, glancing from gravy to her eyes to his, I saw what we had all always known and only forgotten; their eyes pulled them together as if a glance had muscle.

"Have a drink," Mom invited. "Sit down, Ken, and talk to your lovely daughter. She'll ask you if she should get married." What a woman. "We went running today. Tell her the truth now, the intended will be here any moment."

"She's just nervous," I told him, "ignore her."

"Never, Julie," he said, "she may be pushy but she's been right all along."

I took his hand, strong and warm, as I remembered. "I missed you Dad, where have you been?"

"Oh, in and out of trouble, here and there, getting back in shape." He pushed his glasses up on his broad forehead, the four-eyed look that had always scared me. "You get restless, you think you have to get away. Julie, it's a crazy world, full of schemes and schemers. You lose track of yourself, think there's a piece of notoriety for you around the corner, around the world. When all you really need is to hear someone say, I still see you; I know you inside out."

He settled back into the cushions and I leaned forward to press him for details. "Forget it, Julie," he said with a mischievous smile, "I had my share of wild times but it's nothing to be proud of." That's when Michael rang the bell. After the brief introductions, I took him into my room for the explanation he deserved.

"Rather unorthodox, I'll admit," I concluded.

"What a family," he said. Then a few kisses, you know.

"Live it up," my mother sang.

"Shh," I soothed Michael, whose quiet nature, small family and scientific inclination left him unprepared for this intrusion. "Don't mind her, she's only playing."

Before dinner we had a toast: "To happy homes," said my father. We all giggled, all except Michael. To all questions he responded sincerely, quietly, in a small voice with many rapid gestures. I could see him reassessing me as a wife, now that the previously incomplete circle of my family was whole. That he wanted to marry me was as

plain as his desire to eat chicken with his hands.

"Dig right in," Mom said, demonstrating. But Michael couldn't abandon his knife and fork. We went through two bottles of wine, a whole apple pie and a pot of Mother's awful coffee. Michael and my father puffed on after-dinner cigars. "You shouldn't smoke," Mom cautioned. "Julia and I ran a mile today. You two would never make it."

"Probably not Kay," my father said, "but I'm always in the mood for a sauna." Mom winked at me, we all laughed. Michael looked bewildered. I rubbed my leg against his for consolation and he nearly jumped.

Kenneth and Kay, my mother and father, cleared the table so that Michael and I could sit close together on the couch. "You smell good," I told him.

"You do too," he said, moving closer. "Want to go out?" Sometimes, in the evening, we'd go driving down dark, quiet roads but tonight I felt like staying in. "God, Julia, how long are you going to keep this up? It's becoming very difficult."

I tried to soothe him; "Maybe later. Tell me what you think of my folks."

"You want to know my honest opinion? I think you should move out. They're in their own little nutshell and you're nothing like them. The sooner you split the better." He paused. "Sure you don't want to go out for a while? A drink?" His touch was hesitant, his voice suddenly tiny.

"Michael, you act like you're afraid of me," I said, laughing. He jumped.

"Of course not. Afraid of what?" I watched his fingers dart from his shoulder to mine, my neck, my ear.

"Come to the gym with me tomorrow, Michael," I said, reaching for his hand. "We'll run together."

"Enough with the running," he snapped. "We need to be together, we need to talk. Make decisions."

"Trust me," I whispered, it's your last chance, only this I didn't say aloud. I set my interior alarm clock for midnight. When it rang, all that was open was my blouse, not his mind, so I sent him home.

First I found something to eat and then I found my parents, Kenneth and Kay, sitting in the den watching television. "He's a fine person," Dad said, "but awfully quiet."

"The silence of terror," Mom added.

I shifted weight on my already sore legs. "Anything else?"

"Well, he loves you, I suppose," Dad said.

"In a very unmuscular way."

"Marry him," Mom said. "It's not so bad. Maybe after a few years and a divorce he'll grow up like your father." She leaned over and whispered something; they laughed; I swear, I heard her bite his ear.

"Live it up Mom," I said, turning to leave.

"Hey, how about the gym tomorrow? We're planning on an early run."

"Maybe. I have to start looking for apartments."

"No goodnight kiss?"

"Oh God, Mother." But this time she had no chance to apologize. I kissed them both, and softly closed the door. □

PAT KALUZA

SMALL FISHES



She found the little gold-speckled fish dead that morning. Floating on top of the miniature tank, the other three fish carefully pretending they knew nothing. She had known that the aquarium was too small, knew it when her brother gave it to her. And now Susan B. Anthony was dead. Strangely pale, her bright red faded, like blood mingling in water. Dead, floating on top of the tank, the one spike of seaweed tickling it as it drifted so absurdly on its side. An omen, she thought. How can you flush an omen down the toilet?

She wrapped it carefully in waxed paper, then white tissue paper, and placed it in an envelope, addressing it over the hump of the small body. To her brother, to show him she was right: the aquarium was too small. She watched the other three fish. Many Rivers, the tiny blue striped one who always ate last, crouched behind a shell, quiet, afraid of death. Ginger Rogers, the prettiest of the four with her spangled fins and black hooded eyes, swam near the top looking for food now that the body had been removed. And Annie Oakley, zebra-striped and always looking for a fight, she simply waited and watched.

Her eyes moved from the small aquarium to the phone, which hadn't rung in two days. Once again she checked to make sure it was still working. And once again she heard the dial tone. She set the receiver down carefully, then adjusted it to make sure it fit securely, picked it up again, listened, replaced it, and began to cry. Soft, hopeless tears, why wouldn't he let her call him?

She would have to tell him soon. He won't be happy, she thought. He'll think it's on purpose. I'll tell him when he comes tonight. After we make love. I'll say, "Listen, I think I'm pregnant." Then his head will swing around, slowest thing on earth, and his eyes will finally lam onto me, and I'll get all whimpery. And have to sit down. And he'll say, "How late are you?" And it will only be 10 days now, and he'll say, "Big deal." And I'll say, "But I can feel it; it's different this time." And he'll say, "Shit." And he'll stomp out of this room, those engineer boots, bigger than life. Snorting.

Then he'll get used to the idea, she thought. Men have that soft side. Squishy inside, about mothers and all.

She walked pigeon-toed toward the full-length mirror, stomach pushed out, fair wispy head leaning back. She turned sideways and puffed out her shirt.

Don't gain any weight, she thought. End up with piano legs. I could borrow Ma's Singer, make some tops. Ma. I'm going to be a Ma.

Standing still, waves of wonder, rounded and gray, rolling over her, suffocating her. She shook herself, found she had been staring at the aquarium again. Too small,

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she thought. Well, this baby's going to be a big one. Roy will know it's his.

She moved her rocking chair next to the aquarium and waited there, waited for the phone to ring. With each rock forward, her whole body strained toward the phone, then, rocking back, she relaxed. A reprieve from the waiting. Then forward again, tense, willing the phone to ring. The rocking chair slowly inched toward the table leg till finally with each rocking motion, she jarred the table and the aquarium. The three fish huddled together in one corner, water splashed, scum swirled, and she continued to rock there, waiting, not waiting, waiting, for hours. Till the phone rang.

"Yes, hello, Roy, is that you?"

"Listen, baby, about tonight. . . ."

"I have a secret message for you."

"Secret message. Christ. I got business."

"Come over after."

"I can't do business thinking about you sitting around with one dinky light on, eyes hanging down to your knees."

"I don't just sit around. I'm thinking, listening. I sing to myself, I think about things. In the quiet."

"You're weird, baby, too weird for me."

"But it's nice to sit here and wait for you. And sometimes it's like hell. Sometimes you're so late I just start to cry."

"This whole thing is getting too fucking intense for me. I'll see you around sometime." And he hung up.

She stood holding the receiver in her hand, dumb, depleted, till an electronic voice blared out at her from it, telling her to hang up. She placed it gently on the phone, then picked it up and waited for the electronic voice to begin again. She moved the phone to the aquarium and sat down. Each time the electronic voice ended its demands, she would replace the receiver and then pick it up again, hanging it on the top edge of the aquarium. The voice would send reverberations through the water, stirring up soft eddies of scum on top, gently rocking the fish.

I should change the water, she thought. Or they'll all die. I should feed them; I don't remember feeding them. But she only sat and rocked, listening to the voice, watching the fish trying to escape the voice.

In the morning she found Ginger Rogers floating on top of the water, her fins limp, her eyes white and putrid in their black mask. She wouldn't cry for a fish so pretty. The beautiful are always ill-fated. But then she spotted Annie Oakley's tiny body caught in the spike of seaweed. It didn't move, that tiny fighter fish. And so Annie Oakley was dead too, her black stripes already looking spotty and her belly swollen. She would not cry, the aquarium was too small, and she would not cry.

She took the bodies and laid them out on the tablecloth. Each had a thin black strand trailing from them. She would not be disgusted; that is how it is in life. She would send Ginger Roger's body to her mother, to tell her. About the baby. But it was harder with Annie Oakley. She had been her favorite. She found a small, clear plastic box and lined it with a piece of white bread, mashing it down to a soft gray dough. She put Annie Oakley's body on it, straightening out the thin black strand of excrement, and

then closed the cover. She placed the small casket on the phone where the receiver should have been.

The phone killed her, she thought.

She remembered about Many Rivers then and turned to the aquarium. The tiniest and shyest of the fish, she couldn't be found. Has she just disappeared, some sea god riding in on a charging white sea horse, whisking her away, saving her from this house of death? No, she's in the shell. Hiding from death. "You silly, you're all I have left of my fishes, I wouldn't let death get you. You'll be my baby's godmother. I'll name her Little Rivers, after you."

She covered the top of the aquarium water with flour, to keep out death. "Death won't go through white," she told the fish. Believing her, Many Rivers inched out of the shell, her blue stripe trembling in the luminescent body. She would dart out of the way of the small grains of flour which floated down from the top, but she seemed to like the shadowed water.

"The others have gone on a very long trip," she told Many Rivers. "They're happier now. They have a really big aquarium where they are. Ginger Rogers has a million lovers, and she just preens and preens. And Annie Oakley is captain of a whole army, and she's taken to polishing her stripes, and she growls now, too. She always wanted to growl."

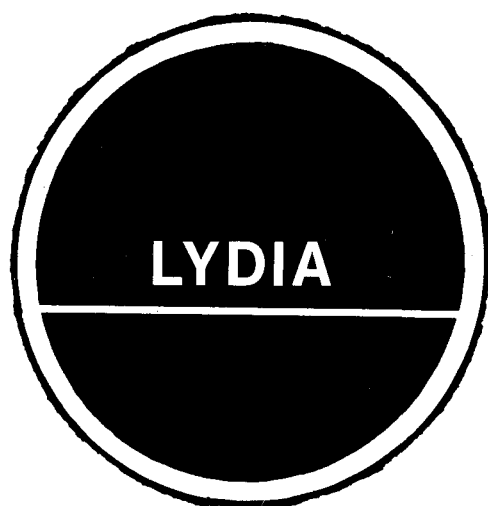
She spent the whole day rocking in front of the aquarium. Someone knocked on the door, but she only stilled her rocking and motioned to Many Rivers to be quiet till the knocking stopped.

"Maybe it was death, maybe it wasn't," she told the fish. "I'll keep you safe. And the baby. And after she comes, we'll find the others in that big aquarium, all shiny and clean and lots of food, and we'll teach Little Rivers to swim right off."

In the evening, she thought that the tiny fish seemed sluggish. Yes, it seemed like she was slower and slower and her blue stripe was fading. She poured more flour on top of the aquarium; she could smell the dank, dark odor of death. She promised the fish that she would stay up all night to ward off death. He could not have her, the last of her fishes.

But she fell asleep in the night, rocking. And dreamed of a cat, a big black jungle cat, straining inside of her to be free of this body. Roars of great sadness, caged, trapped in her body. Straining against the fluid walls. And she knew in her dream that her period had come, her blood was flowing, and the baby was dead, had never been. She felt the slow dark ache pulling her body down, pulling at the earth, at all the sadness of the earth. The big black cat screamed to be free, and she cried in her sleep for the blood that flowed back into the earth, in exchange for all the sadness.

In the quiet light of the morning, she grieved for her lost baby, her tears spilling onto the paste that covered the top of the aquarium. She found Many Rivers after much searching, her dead body almost transparent in her favorite shell, the pale blue stripe still faintly glowing. She left her there in the aquarium and rocked and rocked, watching the small body fade more and more till only the thin silver backbone could be seen through the murky water. □



I never went into her pet shop if I could possibly avoid it. Nobody did. Poor soul—she was one of those creatures so unattractive I could barely stand to look at her. Shapeless, pale, thick-lipped, mustached, and hairy-armed, she clumped around her shop flat-footed, her thick legs going straight down into white ankle socks and black laced shoes. The only sign she gave of youth or girlishness was a tiny locket on a delicate gold chain, which she wore always.

And talk! It was clear from our first encounter that, given the slightest chance, she'd corner me—corner anyone who came in—and talk-talk-talk-talk-talk. I believe she would've recited the alphabet just to keep us there. The place gave me the creeps.

But the fact was that hers was the only shop for easily ten miles around with a halfway decent selection of pet supplies, besides which she carried a reputable line of seed packets and some house and garden plants as well. And, of course, pets—bunnies, mewing kittens, hamsters, chameleons, guinea pigs, mice of all colors, toads, snakes, puppies, canaries, love birds, tankfuls of guppies and goldfish. Even a monkey and a parrot. All for sale.

When she first opened the place, the letters on the sign out front said "Come on in & let's be Friends!" And inside she had a pot of coffee, steaming and waiting. It didn't take long, though, before everyone around got wise to what that was all about.

While her brother was still there helping her turn the old roadside shack into a store, I didn't mind going in so much. I'd check to see if his truck was parked outside. If it wasn't, I'd go about doing other errands and come back when I was sure he'd be there to wait on me. He was a talker too, but at least I could manage to stock up on the geriatric dog food the vet prescribed for Duffy or pick up some of his favorite rawhide bones without squandering half an hour doing it.

The brother must have been company for her—a substantial help, too, keeping the place swept out, the merchandise in order. For once her business was launched and he went back home to his wife and children, the

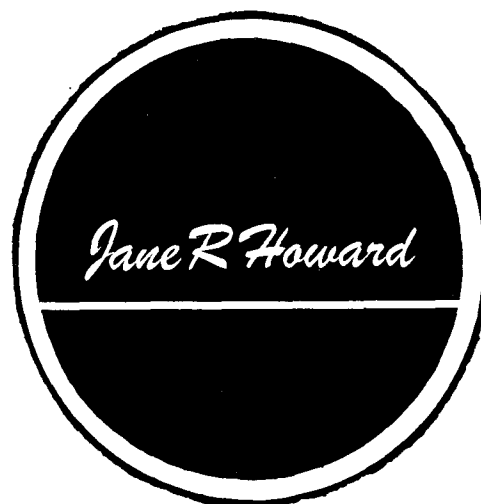
shelves in her store took on a film of dust. But, more than that, not six months had passed before they began to be taken over, inch by inch, by tiny plastic boxes containing whales' teeth, glass jars of squid and octopus. And on the walls there began to appear mounted antlers of elk and deer, pelts of foxes and beaver and Arctic hare. Raccoon tails. All for sale.

Intrigued by these, I made the mistake of mentioning a bearskin rug my father once had in his den. At once she clutched my arm and—never taking her intent black eyes off me—proceeded to tell me every last detail about every single item in her collection. "I found them all at flea markets," she explained, fingering the slim gold chain at her throat. "Since my brother left, I spend all my spare time at flea markets. I go to every single booth. The dealers—we talk. They talk to me—tell me what they're selling. I pay. I buy from them. I pay what they ask. And we talk. And sometimes have coffee. And it's—friendly—talking." And, with an inner-humming sound, she stroked a red fox skin against her cheek. Her fingers still clung to my arm. "My brother. He went back home." Her tone seemed pleading. "Some coffee?"

But I had other errands. As I took my leave, it crossed my mind that she seemed somehow smaller than I remembered her as being. Smaller. And more bent over.

After the bearskin incident, though, I started keeping a list of Duffy's needs. And when it grew to either sufficient length or urgency, I'd time my stop at the pet shop so that at least one other car was parked outside on the gravel—its owner, I hoped, already ensnared in her trap of chatter. I'd run in, find the items I'd come for, put my money on the counter, and make my getaway with a quick "good to see you."

But it now struck my eye that not only were her shelves becoming a hopeless tangle, even the aisles were growing cluttered. Stuffed owls, snake skins—split and spread, a swordfish breaking water, and even a pair of elephant tusks leaning off in a corner. Some ivy no one wanted to buy had attached its tendrils to the central support beam and now twined ceilingward, lush and green.



And something else! There were cats. Live cats on the highest shelves, on top of the counter, under the counter, in the pet baskets for sale, among the salves and ointments and litter. Immense, sleek, sinuous cats—grown, no doubt, from kittens no one chose to carry home. If I made the slightest move toward one, any one, it responded to the fullest, leaping to me, fastening itself to my leg, rubbing hard, purring like a muffled kettle drum.

But I thrust them aside. Because if, God forbid, the other customer escaped before I could, it would fall to me to hear the full history of exactly how and at which flea market she had acquired each taxidermed animal, each snake skin, and at last the elephant tusks. "From Africa," she'd say, as she smoothed her fingers over the ivory. "The dealer said." And then, pressing toward me, "Your family? Some coffee? Stay. Tell me about your family."

"Thank you anyway," I'd say, and it occurred to me that, as I spoke, she seemed smaller—smaller still—and hairier.

The last time I ever saw her, so far as I'm certain, was the day Duffy's collar broke, split right in half. Twice I cruised past her store and, seeing no cars outside, attended to other errands. On the third try, I decided to go in anyway. I'd simply give the impression I was in a tremendous hurry.

Inside, I could barely make my way through the aisles and was curious to see that not one item bore a price tag. On the counter, dust thick, sat the monkey, playing contentedly with a large conch shell. The parrot was perched on top of the cash register, preening its brilliant feathers and chuckling to itself. "Cuppa coffee?" it said. "Cuppa coffee?"

But the coffee pot was unplugged and cold.

Cats were everywhere. The smell was animal, and the air seemed strangely moist and pleasant.

I pushed through the surrounding maze and found the box of collars shoved aside. In its place was an assortment of tiny green and black onyx carvings of frogs and turtles and lizards and camels and gazelles and giraffes, all carefully arranged in a friendly grouping.

I could hear her shuffling about somewhere in the

back of the store, back where the animal cages were, talking in her dull, hopeless, droning way. Talking, I supposed, to the chameleons or the mice or the love birds.

"Miss," I called. "Can you wait on me?"

"Coming," she replied, as a yellow canary dove past my ear.

Today, as I passed the pet shop, I noticed the clumsily-spaced lettering on the sign out front. "Going out of business. To all my friends and customers. Thanx and goodbye. Lydia."

There were no cars parked outside, but I turned in at once. I had to.

There was no getting past the front door though. Inside was—a jungle!

I poked my head in and peered around the vast, green, mossy expanse. Nothing but the whish of wings, the soft skitterings of tiny, bright-eyed rodents darting beneath the cover of grass that had grown up tall and thick in the aisles. A rabbit sat on its haunches. A big calico cat came and leaned into my ankles.

"Miss!" I called. I wanted her to answer! "Lydia?"

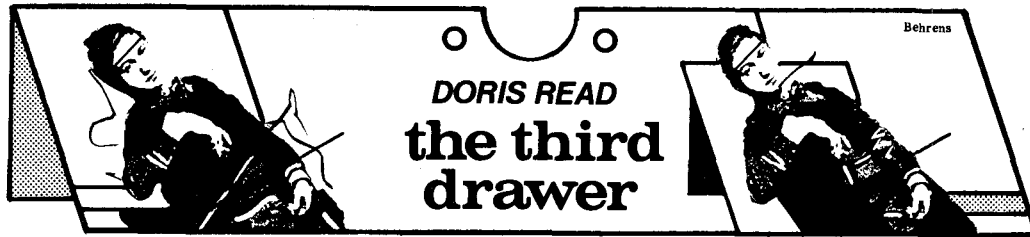
She was in there. I knew she was. "Lydia! I have something I want to tell you!"

But there was no reply. Only the sound, in a far-off corner, of an owl hooting. Through the foliage, I saw a gazelle leap high.

Nearby sat a small, black-eyed, furry animal such as I've never seen before, with most unusual markings—neat white rings encircling each of its legs just above its solid black paws. And around its neck the slenderest trace of gold.

It appeared to be conversing with a toad. And the toad was listening, enthralled. □

JANE R. HOWARD lives in Deerfield, Illinois, and has published several plays and stories. She is fond of theatre in Chicago, "both Loop and 'off-Loop.'"



SATURDAY

Talking makes me very tired and anyway, there is no one I am interested in talking to, they are all so silly and most of them are deaf. I prefer to stay in my room. Actually, I'd like to go to bed but I can't because I don't have a nightgown. I called up my daughter and asked her to buy me a nightgown but she doesn't listen to me.

"Look in the third drawer," she tells me. No matter what I ask for, she says, "Look in the third drawer."

I know there are no nightgowns in the third drawer. I open it and look in but I can't see any. It isn't as though I were asking for a present. I would pay for anything she bought me. I have enough money for a couple of nightgowns. And slips too. Why should they want to deprive me of my underwear? It doesn't make sense. I have to wear the same things day after day because there are no clean ones to change into. When my daughter comes she takes away the dirty things in the laundry bag but when she brings them back clean she hides them from me.

But now I am too tired to think about it any longer. Here in the closet is that green dress I don't like. I will wear it as a nightgown tonight.

SUNDAY

On Sundays we have dinner at lunch time and now it is over. I am sitting here thinking, as usual.

I have two daughters but I keep forgetting which is which so I call them "Daughter." That way they don't know that I get their names mixed up. That is rather a clever solution, I think. One of them lives far away and I think she has forgotten about me, although the one who lives near me keeps saying, "Here is another letter from—from, whichever one it is." But I don't remember the letters.

It is time for my daughter to come. Here she is, but she has not brought me any clothes.

"Where is the clean laundry?" I ask her.

"I don't have any today," she says coolly. Oh, the villainous girl! "Once a week on Wednesdays I take it away and bring it back on Friday. This is Sunday afternoon, Mother," she says.

"But I don't have anything clean to wear," I tell her.

"Come over here, Mother, and let us look in the third drawer. You have lots of things in here."

I go where she directs, although I get dizzy walking across the room. My daughter opens the third drawer and points to things.

"Here are nightgowns. Here are slips. Here are—" But I can see nothing there and feel faint.

"I must sit down," I tell her.

"If you would wear your new glasses, you would see better," says my daughter. "Then you would be able to find your things."

I don't like the new glasses. They are heavy on my face. I don't look like myself when I wear them. Besides, I have never worn glasses except for reading, and why should I start now? If my friends came to see me, they wouldn't know me with these glasses on. But I can't explain all this to my daughter. I did try, once, looking in the third drawer while wearing the glasses, but I couldn't find anything.

"Perhaps it would be better, Mother, to move these things out of the third drawer and put them someplace else. Perhaps somewhere in the bathroom. Or in the clothes closet."

"No no," I tell her. "There is nothing there. Why can't you buy me just a few things? I don't need much."

"Mother, if you had any more nightgowns, you could open a shop," she says. She is playing games with me.

"If that is the case," I tell her reasonably, "why did I have to wear that green dress to bed last night?"

"You didn't have to," she says.

Now she is looking at her watch.

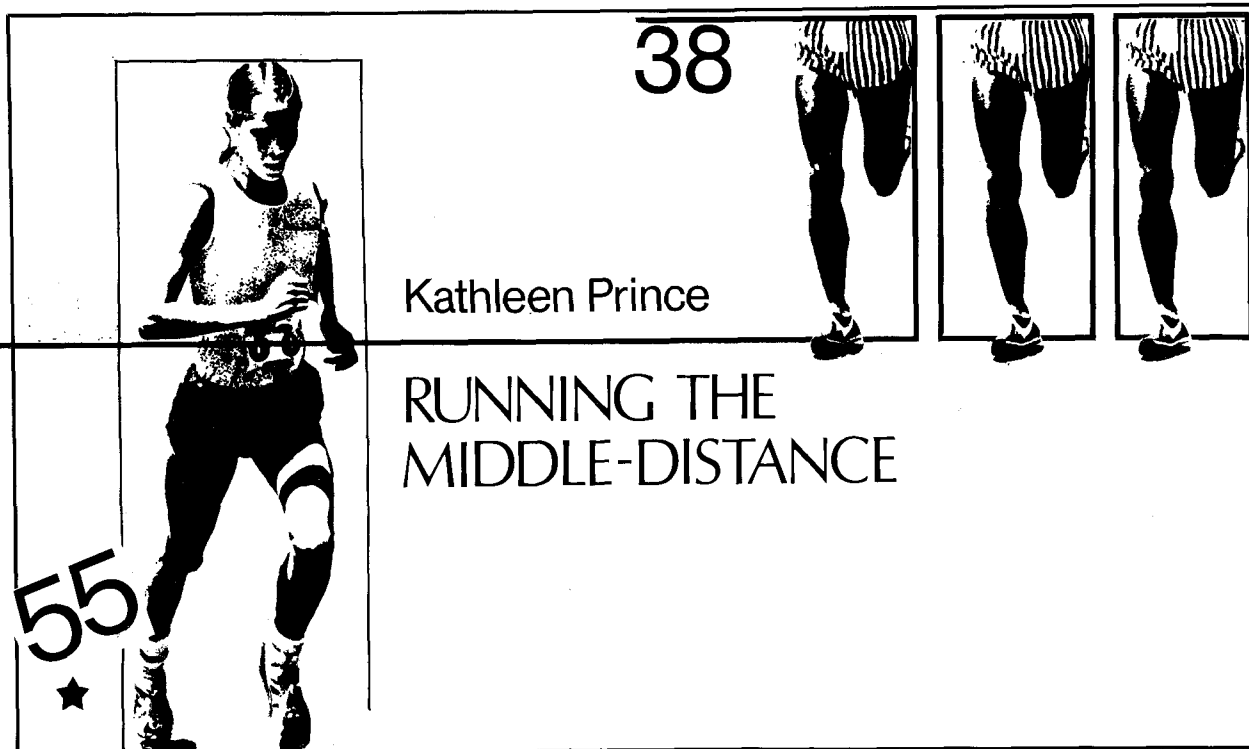
"I must go," she says. She kisses me goodbye and rushes out.

She never stays long, although often she takes me out for a ride in her car. I pretend to enjoy it but getting in and out of the car makes me very tired. Still, it provides a change of scene. I don't like it because she drives too fast, although when I cry out in alarm she tells me she is doing only twenty-five. She keeps pulling over to the side to let other cars go past, so I suppose she is telling the truth but it seems faster to me. Also, I am always afraid the door will open and I will fall out.

They take care of me here but not well enough. Often when I call them to tell them the lights are out and I can't find the switch to turn them on, they say they will come right away but they don't. I wait and wait but no one comes. I keep calling them in the office to tell them what is wrong but they don't pay attention. Sometimes I lose the office phone number, and then I call my daughter—her number is taped to the phone—and I ask her to call the office, but she is likely to say no, not unless it is really an emergency. She does not understand that it is an emergency to have to sit in the dark because you can't find the lights.

I think today I will get my nightgown ready before it gets dark, in case I can't find the lights again. This afternoon my daughter was going on, as usual, about the third drawer, so I will open it a little bit and look in. I am afraid to pull it open very far because it might fall out, so I pull it just a little and look inside but, of course, there is nothing there. □

DORIS READ is a native easterner who has migrated "by easy stages" to Santa Barbara, California, where she free-lances.



Kathleen Prince

RUNNING THE MIDDLE-DISTANCE

K. Dyble Thompson

When I'm standing in the line before a heat I look like any other runner. We get out of our sweats and practice our starts a little. At the big meets they announce us and I wait for my lane and name and track club to be called and then I walk out a few steps, my arm straight up over my shoulder but preoccupied. They announce my number, my best time ever in the event. I'm concentrating. I've got my mind cocked and I'm easing up relaxing and getting ready to maneuver a line in the race. I try not to look at the grandstands. The people up there are looking us over well, they are really looking. We're like race horses down here, like dogs. I look down my lane and see some paper cups and wrappers from McDonald's blowing across the track.

I'm an amateur and I run the middle-distance. After a meet I get my gear together and take off somewhere in my car. I've got a little MG that I bought myself from my earnings as a waitress. I used to be a waitress but I had to quit because I couldn't stand it. When this season is over I'll have to go to work at something else. I get out on a highway somewhere and drive. I take my time and it calms me and I begin to feel fine. Even if I had a terrible day at the track I'm all right when I can get in my car. There is something about motion for me. My happiest moments are when I'm in a good steady motion. That's when my nervousness turns into something, into an exhilaration or what I like better, something very steady in me, seeming almost low key, barely mine at all, when really it's a calm hard strength.

We are in the competitive season. The track is now more than any other time my only frame of reference. My foundation is possibility, of the things I may accomplish in the contests. I'm nervous all the time. I wake up with it, it grows to anxiety if I'm not training hard enough. Jeffrey, my coach, watches my face when I run the overdistance to see if I'm relaxed or tired. I concentrate on relaxing. My

cheeks bounce. I take short, low strides and unflex my fingers. I feel my heartbeat slowly accelerate its pressure. During rest periods Jeffrey comes over and talks to me. If a race is coming up we talk about opponents and strategy.

When I was scheduled to run in the Eugene meet I knew that Carborough would be there. She's from Texas and I'm a Californian. I have taken so many seconds to Robin Carborough that it really gets me going. Carborough first, Stevens second. "Lee," Jeffrey will say to me, "what is it you were doing out there?" He's glad I can take second but he pushes me. He knows I could beat her if I wouldn't tie up. I don't know what it is. I tie up almost with self-consciousness in a race with Carborough. That's crazy for a runner. I watch her run her victory laps, very cool, sometimes not even acknowledging the crowd. The applause ripples through the grandstands, following her as she lopez past. It sounds like the surge of underwater rocks when an ocean wave rolls in, lifting them, clunking them together. I shouldn't watch her. It's a lack of control.

I have never seen Carborough nervous. Of course the trick for all of us is to appear calm. We stand in line on the track waiting and everybody is nervous but Carborough goes through some stretching and bending exercises as if she is totally alone. She has a definite solitary quality, self-sufficient. She has a dark tan from workouts and her face is gaunt and still, her blonde hair clipped short like a cap. I look at her as little as possible until she runs her victory lap. Then I watch her well. I have never spoken to her.

Jeffrey and I discuss Carborough's strategy. She is a "scientist" on the track, that is, she paces her four laps evenly, gauging her energy. I am an "artist" and depend on my inspiration and speed. The problem, the equation we are trying to solve, is the distribution of energy. We have only so much of it and we have to learn how to strengthen it, concentrate it into rhythms, manipulate it.

I need a lot of sleep. I go to bed at eight or nine and get up at six in the morning, tie back my wiry brown hair and wash my face. I leave my apartment about seven, carrying my practice uniform and track shoes in a bag. I get in my

KATHLEEN PRINCE lives in Portland, Oregon. An earlier story of hers appeared in Portland Review.

MG and drive to the track club. Jeffrey is already there, waiting for his runners. I change quickly and get outside on the track. I go to the center, do some stretching and bending exercises to warm up. Then I begin my workout. I do fifteen minutes of loose jogging on the grass, barefoot when it's warm to toughen my feet and massage the sciatic nerve in the arch of the foot. This helps relax my back and upper body. I put on my spikes and run out around the edge of town on the paths the city has made and then get out to some hills for my cross-country, where I *fartlek*, that is, run various distances at different speeds. Usually I run with four other women and we do this six times a week, running about eight miles a day. This exercise is strengthening and we work on a relaxed run to develop cardiorespiratory and muscular endurance. We also run on some straightaways and do some fast quarters to practice pacing. We repeat and repeat. We run on hard and soft surfaces to use more muscle groups. My mouth is open and my cheeks are loose. In the long-distance I lengthen my stride slightly from the middle-distance form. My arm and knee action is lower to conserve energy and I lean forward only a little. We raise up on our toes and bring our knees up for the sprint.

When we get back to the club we rest. In the next session we do a few forty yard wind sprints, working on form. We do no timed runs until the early season and there is no competition with teammates. I run the 800 meter wearing a weighted vest. I take off the weights and run it ten seconds slower than my fastest. I love this particular workout. I pace myself. I'm very comfortable in it, knowing I am capable of more, holding it back like I'm riding an animal. I run on the balls of my feet. My stride is now in middle-distance form, my body a little higher, lighter since the weights are gone and since I can raise my arms and knees above cross-country form, break from the slogging pace of jogging and begin my rhythmic struggle with my energy. But this isn't my all-out struggle so I feel powerful, holding back and watching the track about fifteen yards ahead as though that were the adversary, as though it might try to move out from under me.

Jeffrey watches me work out. A lot of the time I will work to please him. I want him to feel that I am superior. I want him to tell the other coaches that his best woman runner is Lee Stevens. I want to be the one who takes those dramatic victory laps. Those are the things that hold me together even though I don't always get them. My heart seems to tighten up when I think about them because I'm not getting enough. I go to sleep at night lying on my back in a fixed position, concentrating on that thing, winning. I feel I could be great. I'll beat Carborough and everybody else for them and show them Lee Stevens is a name runner. I imagine my photograph on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*. The photograph is in brilliant color. I'm wearing my yellow meet uniform with marine blue trim. Everything looks very clean. My legs are scissored in a well-balanced stride. My face looks sculpted, hot, my wiry hair blown back looking tangled and wet. The people in the crowd are watching me but blurred behind me. I catch glimpses of myself in the mirror, a particular angle that might highlight my high cheekbones, my hungry cheeks that show the strain in my life, and

think of camera work they'll do of me to show them what I'm made of. I get nervous thinking about it but I fix my nervousness in my brain in the fixed position for my sleep. I concentrate the nervousness as though the concentration itself will bring it all to me. I deserve it. I've got to have it. That's who I am. I have not been able to beat Carborough yet and I am beginning to feel the strain of it. In my sleep I picture her from the back. She is running just ahead of me but I have made a tactical error so that I'm boxed in behind her by another runner. I can't escape my position. Her short hair bounces on her head and I can even hear it. I feel a terrible anxiety. I want to run right through her. My energy seeps into this anxiety and I become afraid. The extent to which I fulfill myself depends directly on my energy. I have not been able to see her face.

I'm working out on the track doing my fastest in the 1500. Jeffrey yells at me. "Push it," he yells. "If it hurts keep pushing." Okay, I think, I've got it. I concentrate almost as much on increasing my pain for a few seconds. My chest burns and my legs ache as if they're cold. I control the torquing I may fall into to compensate for the pain. The pain is better than guilt, I think, or perhaps I don't even think the words but realize them in an instant because I have lived with them for so long. Sometimes when I practice my fastest I hate Jeffrey because I'm solitary when I'm running and all he's got are words. Then if I come in with a good time he's happy with me, he sees I've still got a chance, and I don't hate him any more.

The next race with Carborough will be outdoors in Eugene, Oregon, on Saturday. That gives me five more days. In my training I am timing my workouts and rest periods to the schedule of the upcoming meet. I have just finished my two-lap warm-down for the day. I feel bitchy. Jeffrey is going to talk to me about the track conditions up there and their piss-poor weather. I know he's approaching me but I pretend to check the spikes on my practice shoes. Jeffrey always dresses nicely and his hair and beard are trimmed and neat. I can't believe it now but I used to have a crush on him. I used to imagine us riding around together in my car. It wasn't very good for my running. He made me uncomfortable. He likes to associate himself with class. I suppose he thinks we are class and let me tell you, if sweat is class we've got it. If running eight miles in the rain and dark at seven in the morning is class we are the classiest. The meets are supposed to make up the stress and loneliness for you but these seconds and thirds are a not-so-compelling road to obscurity. I've narrowed my life to the track. Jeffrey has damned few kind words for me lately. I'm twenty-five and I'm going to do five more years of this.

Jeffrey takes the bag off his shoulder and sits next to me heavily. "How do you feel?" he asks me.

"Like shit," I say. I know the muscles in my face are set against him. I stare at my shoes.

"Oh," he says, surprised. "We'd better get some heat on your legs." I don't move. "Listen," he says, "you're going to have to bring yourself up." He stands. "You know what it is, don't you?"

"No. I'm depressed or something."

"You're thinking about winning instead of running."

"I don't know who I am any more."

"I want you to get yourself together. Then we'll see some running."

"Shove it," I say.

"Tomorrow I want you to run on the stairs and then use the iron shoes in the leg exercises. And get some heat on your legs immediately." He speaks quietly. He picks up his bag and walks off.

I walk into the locker room but nobody is in there. I sit on a long bench. The fluorescent lighting is stark and the floor is dirty. The strain is a thin wire of anxiety through my body. I breathe deeply to relax the wire. I am much too tired to move.

All I've been able to do this past week is train. Jeffrey has been coaching me in a businesslike way but speaking to me as little as possible. He watches me a great deal when I'm on the track, sometimes taking photographs so that I'll be able to study the strengths and weaknesses of my form. I think he may be considering dropping me. I think the race with Carborough is going to determine it. He doesn't like my moods. "You need a woman coach," I can hear him saying. "Somebody to work with you more closely." Maybe he thinks I'm menstruating and that I'll be better for the meet. But my periods don't give me trouble, only a little heaviness. I've always been moody and nervous. I can control my nervousness when I run because when it comes right down to it if you don't learn to control your nerves you'll blow it every time, you'll always run those few tenths or hundredths slower than the time you know you could make. Before a race you relax your arms and legs. You collect your nervousness in a tight ball in your guts until you finally hear the gun and then it explodes inside you and you are running in rhythmic spasms around the track, releasing yourself gradually and conscious of the relief, the release, violent like an orgasm. But my moods are different. My depressions are almost cunning. I wake up with them, sometimes for no apparent reason, as if I've had a dream that I can't remember, that has sunk away from me into a deep black pool. My depressions weigh on me like a great awful pull of gravity. I suddenly become irritable when a few minutes before I was not. I become so angry that I can't speak to people. I can't overcome my resentment and speak to Jeffrey now. I avoid him as much as possible. He thinks I'm just anybody even though he's gotten inside my identity, my essence which is my running.

They know how to stage a meet at Hayward Field in Eugene. Usually they draw a good crowd. I'm afraid of the crowd in a way. It seems like a gigantic many-headed force that has almost infinite energy. But I remember some of my own victory laps, the incredible lift the approval of a crowd like that can give you. The energy in their enthusiasm is like an injection of adrenalin, you feel almost a palpable transference of energy from them to you. The applause, the approval, pours over your sweat like a thick, soothing liquid.

I saw Robin Carborough at the motel last night at dinner. She sat across the room at a long table with her team. She looks good. I know she has been training hard. She talked closely with her coach, a tall thin woman whose

own nervousness is usually apparent. Her hair is short, gray, and she has a habit of crossing her long arms over her stomach and grasping her elbows and leaning toward the person she is speaking to. Carborough looked young and feminine next to this woman. She listened attentively during the meal and did not let her eyes wander around the room. I found myself jealous of their conversation. I wondered what they were saying.

Jeffrey sat across the table from me but he was busy talking to a relay runner. I ate silently but I couldn't help but watch him and, somehow, he seemed attractive to me again, not as though I was falling for him all over again or as if my bad feelings were gone but in a sort of cloying, masochistic way. I saw a real strength in him that approached power. He had addressed short remarks to me several times at the table, about training, the schedule, composition of heats. But he became more and more involved in his conversation with the relay runner, pushing back his chair and holding his hands up to demonstrate something, and I worked to calm my tension and gradually became more aware of the other people sitting around me. On my right was another woman runner, a sprinter named Marta Canby whom I was rooming with at the motel. She was trying to come back in the Eugene meet after recovering from a pulled hamstring.

"Lee," she said, "you're quiet."

I was watching Robin Carborough again. It was so easy to do. She had not looked away from her coach's face and gestures once. She was like a queen receiving counsel. I couldn't imagine the things she normally talked about, what she did with her time when she was away from the track.

"What's the matter with you and Jeffrey?" Marta asked.

I like Marta but I didn't want her to know that I think he wants to drop me. Then the whole club would know about it. "I don't know," I said. "Nothing really."

"He's mad at you, isn't he?"

"My life doesn't revolve around his opinions."

"He's your coach."

"Sure, but if I don't keep winning all the time he loses interest in me."

"He'll hear you if you're not quiet."

"All right, so what? I'm not invisible, am I? Do I look invisible to you?"

Jeffrey heard me this time and turned to me abruptly. I think I wanted him to hear me anyway. "Lee," he said, "I want to talk to you." We walked quickly out of the dining room. He turned angrily. I saw that he was still carrying his stained dinner napkin.

"This isn't the time to start bitching," he said.

I looked away and said nothing.

"I think you should get up to bed early," he said. "You look tired."

"Fuck you," I said.

"What is the matter with you, Lee? Will you pull yourself together?" He worked to keep his voice down.

"You know a lot about running but you don't know how lonely it is," I told him.

"Of course I know," he said. "I've got to know that."

"You don't realize it. You see a lot of glamour in it."

"There is glamour in it," he said. "It's a beautiful sport."

"Sometimes."

"If you don't think so you should be out of it."

"Yes, become a coach. Or a track photographer, picking out the bits of glamour for them."

"I don't know if you should be running tomorrow," he said.

"I'm going to. I've been training hard for this meet." He knew I had a better chance than any of the other women on our team, if I could get myself up for it.

"Okay, but try to relax, that's all I ask."

When he gave me this little morsel of coaching I felt like crying. I felt like a little kid. "Okay," I said. I wanted to ask him if he was going to drop me but I knew I couldn't talk much more without crying and if I did that he really would pull me from the race. So I kept it very straight. "I'll be fine," I told him. "I'm going to bed." It was about seven so I left him there and tried to get some sleep in my room. I cried a little, not much, because the tension was like an alabaster egg and absolutely would not break down. I went to sleep quickly. I didn't hear Marta come in.

I'm on the track warming up. In a way it's a tremendous relief just being out here finally. I've been sitting in the shade this morning waiting for my warmup time. I ate breakfast early, about six, so that my food will digest before the first heat at eleven o'clock. My first heat is a fast one, which is what Jeffrey and I wanted because we are qualifying for the semi-finals by time. Robin Carborough isn't in this one though. I'm doing a long, easy warmup this morning. I have actually been waking up on the track. There are a lot of people running around, a lot of colors. They're working on the high jump and raking the long jump pit and some guys are out in their sweats working on pacing. The weather has turned out to be pretty good. The summers are all right in Oregon. It's a little overcast, which is fine with me, but it's also humid. I hope it won't get too hot later. It's seventy-six degrees now. There's only a small breeze. The semi-final for the 1500 is at four and the first three women in that race will go on to the final tomorrow morning at ten. I'm only running the 1500 at this meet. That's the mile, four laps. The qualifying is 4:35.0 and I'm looking for a 4:33.0

I do some loose jogging, some stretching, no hard resistance exercises. People are already in the stands watching us warm up. I'm conscious of them but I watch the track and feel withdrawn. Don't bother me, don't bother me, I think in time with my strides, but why I'm thinking that, where it comes from, I don't know. I slept all right but the anxiety is starting early for me today. I'm anxious for my qualifying heat and terrified of it. I continue, concentrating on my muscles, my breathing, to forget the queasiness in my stomach. The nerves running from my thumbs to my forefingers pulse with an uncomfortable, intense tickling, aching sporadically. My hair is tied back but it is thick and bounces against my back. I must get it cut, I think, to be more comfortable, but I can't make a decision about the style. I picture Wilma Rudolph doing her

Geritol commercial. Her hairdo is modern and her face has that glowy health that models have. Her smile is dazzling, her sense of well-being. I picture Wilma Rudolph in her kitchen. It's morning. She's spooning out her Geritol and photographers are snapping her picture. Then I think about the champion. My God, the word has become trite, glib, over-glamorous. When they imagine the champion what is it they think of? It's the moment of winning, the beauty of the perfect body. The synthesis of mental and physical skills—forms and concentrations—into that singular moment at the top of the pyramid, breaking the tape. They don't consider the startling implosion she feels directly after a race, the collapsing of breath, the nausea, the stark whiteness of the sun. It's an age of champion worship. When an athlete performs she achieves the inscrutability of a sphinx.

I smile. Surprisingly, I feel more relaxed at this moment than I have in weeks. I amuse myself for a moment longer, imagining various star athletes drinking Geritol from secret silver flasks, pouring it over their skin to use as suntan oil. They bathe in it and serve it to their closest friends in crystal wine glasses with *hors d'oeuvres*.

Robin Carborough finally comes out on the track. She is wearing a baby blue sweatsuit. Hot stuff. I look away, concentrating on my own running. Okay, I think, this isn't a joke so why make a joke out of it? I'll end up making a joke out of myself. I consider the mythological creature, the sphinx, the winged monster with the head and breasts of a woman and the body of a lion. Carborough, I think. We run like animals out here. Aristotle realized it, writing about human running and the gaits of animals. The sphinx has a riddle, and destroys anyone who can't guess the answer. Carborough also has a riddle: How do I keep beating you? What are you going to do to beat me?

Now I'm getting angry at her, as I run. I come around the turn and slow down my jog to look at her. She is sitting on the first tier of bleachers, looking down. I see the top of her head. She usually only does a short warmup before a heat. She's probably waiting for her coach, that weird Mary Poppins-like woman who is so attentive. Ah, jealousy, how bitter; I realize again how extremely jealous of her I am. As I run closer I see that she's holding something and looking down at it, a paperback book. She is totally absorbed in her reading and when I can see her face I become fascinated by it because she is so fascinated. Her mouth is slightly open, she is concentrated into the page but she has lost her strong self-sufficient look. I wonder what is on that page that is of so much interest to her. She actually looks human to me, unaware for once. She's showing some feeling. Of course it was ridiculous of me to have ever thought of her as anything but normal. It was a little crazy. But she has always seemed so remote, so beautifully and calmly self-contained, and then she has gone on to beat me and run those cool, self-contained victory laps, as though the applauding crowd absolutely did not matter to her. I feel a little lighter, a little less mystified. I am almost grateful to her.

In a few minutes her coach comes out. Robin puts the book on the bleachers, turning it over to hold her place. She leaves with her coach, probably to go to the grass behind the stadium for a little loose exercise. I'm just

walking now, relaxing. My muscles are warm. The sweat-suit holds the heat around my legs. I look at the little book left on the bleachers next to her bag. I want to look at that book. I can hardly contain my curiosity. I go to the grass in the center of the track and do a few exercises. The shot-put men are out on the grass, slouching around on their field like they're still half asleep. I lean back and watch them but I'm still considering the book. What is this? I think. Am I in love with her or something? No. I would just like to see her book. I have never been able to imagine how she thinks, what interests her. I'd better go look at it before she comes back. I go around to the gate and walk into the bleachers. The covered grandstand is huge and the book looks terribly small. I walk over quickly and stand there looking down at it. The book is about Hollywood. On the cover is a painting of an actress, her face, over-large in the top center, and below her is a mob of small indistinctive people looking up, in awe of her. Now I remember that I've seen the picture several times before but this time it truly interests me. I imagine Robin Carborough reading this book. But that isn't what interests me at the moment, it's this picture of the actress. I begin to feel jumpy and go back where I belong on the track.

I won my qualifying heat this morning with a 4:33.9. The crowd had filed in quickly, energetically. The women's long jump and men's shot-put were scheduled before the women's qualifying heats for the 1500. I lay down and rested for ten minutes before my event and when I went into my lane I was focused. Robin was not running in this one. Too bad, I thought. I felt good. I knew exactly where Jeffrey was standing. Before the race we talked for a few minutes. It seemed to me that he was worried about me and yet had confidence in me. I took off my sweats, my nervousness moving me around a little. I had lane five, which was good because I could see most of the field. Good God, I thought, I've got to win this one at least. I'm capable of it. It's hard enough to live with myself now.

I jogged back to the sidelines after the race, listening to the applause, which followed me. I waved and the applause mounted. I had a picture in my mind of myself running. I was looking at myself objectively and concentrating on the image of myself running. I had done this before. It was an ugly vanity and I knew it. I hated myself, even as I felt superior. I have never felt so uncomfortable with it as I did this morning. I caught myself, so for once I looked closely at the people up in the stands. I directed my attention toward them rather than assuming that they were all directing their total attention toward me. They were all sorts of people. I looked at many of them individually. Some of them were talking as they clapped. Some were eating or looking away indifferently. They would all go home and lead their various lives. I would go on with my life, training, ultimately, for these people, for everybody.

The semi-final is coming up. I've been doing my usual slow warmup. The weather has remained stable. It's quite good. Several events are taking place at once and everything is on schedule. Jeffrey and I discuss the race. I have

lane four. It's almost time for me to have my ten minute rest. I'm frightened.

"Remember," Jeffrey says, "stay loose. Try to relax."

"I will." I want him to put his arm around me or something.

"You're all right today, aren't you?"

"Sure. I've already won the first one."

"You can win this, too. Now go get your rest."

"You're acting like a coach again, now that I've won something." I was happy with his interest in me and angry at the same time.

"I'm trying to make a complete runner out of you," he said.

"I'm moody, that's all."

"It's all right if you're moody. I expect my runners to be a little temperamental. But you can't let it happen to you on the track so you tighten up in the middle of a race."

When I lie down before the race I think about the champion: pushing her psychological limit as close as possible to her physiological limit. The champion: doesn't always have better skills than her competitors but has developed the capacity to tolerate heavier loads. But I can't get inside those words right now. I can only think about running. I want to get up and run. I block the words out of my mind and imagine I am looking down a long tunnel into space, nothing. I see the picture of the actress on the cover of Robin's book. I block her out, calming myself.

When I get up I jog a little on the track. Finally it's time to take our lanes. I'm frightened. My lips feel cold. Robin stands very straight in lane two. The lanes are staggered and she is in front of me a little. She looks down her lane. Everything about her is very quiet. The line of women is staggered, imperfect. Our bodies vary, imperfect. Our faces are lined and pimpled. We don't look like picture postcard athletes with our sweat marks and dirt around our ankles. I take all this in with one glance, then I look away and prepare myself. The announcer has a young, capable voice. He has sworn over the loudspeaker twice when he didn't think the mike was on and the crowd enjoyed these mistakes. I listen to him to determine exactly where we are in the schedule. The crowd is watching a high jumper and when that's finished he'll announce our race. The moment passes, the crowd reacts, there is a moment of hesitation, preparation in the booth. "Now," he says. He announces the race and begins announcing the runners. When her turn comes Robin takes a few steps down her lane, raises her arm in acknowledgment of the applause without looking up. Her glance slides down the line of runners and for a moment she looks at me, unseeing, with the expression of a tennis player who eyes the opposite side of the court an instant before she serves. A sort of reaffirmation of the boundaries when her head and muscles are already trained for them. I'm reminded that there's never any certainty about anything. Also I'm reminded that this morning during my workout I finally saw something in her face besides running. I drop these thoughts just as I throw my sweatsuit aside. We've been announced. I loosen my arms and lean forward slightly. I've studied this starter with Jeffrey. I'm familiar with his inflection and interminable pauses. He holds up the gun.

I've focused. The crowd is quiet. We're molded in our positions and we face counterclockwise on the track. I am not even thinking about the gun. I'm concentrated and ready with my gutfull of nervous energy. I know that I appear calm but any loud noise will set me off, cause my first explosion of nervousness. It seems like craziness. I swear I can smell the sweat off everyone standing in the line. The crowd can't see the crescents of sweat marks staining our meet uniforms in our armpits, it can't smell us either. I imagine it to be a crazy sort of smell. Beneath my controlled relaxed surface my tension is so great that the sweat smell has something hot about it, like electric wires overcharged and burning. But that's crazy. I feel my wiry hair running along the back of my neck over more light sweat. When the gun goes off the sound doesn't seem to enter me through my ears. It's more like an explosion in my own mind, as if the sound originated there and was shocking my nervous system into instantaneous movement. It goes all through me to run. There are no false starts. We start running, straightening up after a few paces, our legs kicking quite high behind us. At this moment we are all parts of one thing, fixed in. I see the picture of myself running.

I hear the rhythm. It's in our clothing rubbing, our shoes slapping, our breath, our thighs. The foot plant is on the balls of the feet and we're not wearing spikes because of the smooth rubberized track surface. We move around the turn. I'm in lane four and when we complete this turn I'm in fourth position. We cut over into lane one as soon as the turn is completed, collapsing into a semi-straight line. Robin is in the second position and I'm in fourth. I watch the back of her head. Her short hair bounces rhythmically. The sky is overcast and still. The tan track looks dirty. My mouth is open, we are swallowing up the meters and I'm thinking, thinking. I loosen up. It's good to be running. I feel like running forever. The distance ahead is short. I'm remembering things about running this time and I'm gradually relaxing the tension and converting it to energy. My focus sharpens and sharpens as my energy courses through me and I hold it in the framework of my pace. It's a quick pace. The field is still together. I'm focusing totally inside and watching the track and Robin Carborough and using myself. It's as if I'm paring an apple. The apple is my energy, and as I run I am paring this apple, first the red, speckled skin and then I go into the white meat and I keep paring and carving and eventually I know I'll be down to the core and the final seed and this apple will be used up. It's a good track with resilience. It stretches ahead of me like a highway. The black lines seem to form a spiral. We'll run around it four times.

I hear the announcer vaguely, mainly sensing the quality of his voice, young, intelligent, but I don't listen to it. The crowd is high above us in the big covered grandstands on both sides of the track. We must look like mice down here, like a little moving game. They're yelling at us. I wish they'd shut up. I want to yell back at them to shut up. It makes me angry. It's not their race, Goddamn it. They're not holding tickets on us like dogs.

I think about myself. I feel good now. I'm thinking and thinking, gauging myself. I know myself. I'm a miler. I need the middle-distance. The 800 is really too short for

me. They say it's genetic, that's the way I'm made up, for the middle-distance. We take the second turn. The field is still tight. Carborough is letting lane one set the pace. It's too fast. In a few seconds, before the next turn, Carborough slows down. She's got to slow it down to keep her even four laps. She'll lose it if she lets somebody else gauge it for her. She slows it down. The rest of the field slows down with her. Okay, one lap finished. Lane one has gone on and moved ahead but her pace is too fast and she won't be able to sustain it. I guess she was trying to psych Carborough but it didn't work. Good. I'm the one who has the chance to beat her.

All right, I'm thinking, one lap. At least I know Carborough a little bit. She has both strength and speed. The only thing I can do is run according to my own capacity. Match my capacity to hers and see what happens. I'm not worried about the others. Maybe that's foolish but I'm not. I watch her blonde hair, her shoulders. I can see her past the woman in front of me. This woman is from a track club in Florida. We space out a little when we go around the turn. I lean in and plant one foot slightly over the other. When we reach the straightaway the woman directly ahead of me falls farther behind Carborough by about one and a half meters. She's too slow. She's going to break my pace. It's time for me to move. I raise my legs a little higher to sprint past her. I feel it in the front of my thighs, it becomes painful but I move. I hear the woman's breathing. I'm running next to her, feeling heavy and driving. We run elbow to elbow. She increases her pace and contests the pass, forcing me to use more energy. She tries to hold me off so that she'll be able to move ahead again on the turn, where she'll have the inside. The crowd is yelling. She sounds heavy next to me, I hear her intake of breath. For a moment it seems that it will be impossible. Move, you bitch. It's as if we're sewn together. Move. The turn is coming. This is taking too much. I wrench it out of me and pass her and use my momentum to build up my distance from her so that when I have the turn I can settle down a little into my own pace. The woman in front is tiring. She was maybe a quarter lap ahead but she's falling back. I meet Carborough's pace, that damned stolid, almost implacable scientific pace. She's damned boring in a way.

I'm right behind her now. I hear the crowd. Her hair looks damp along the nape of her neck. The field is stringing out. I move closer and look down at her legs pumping back powerfully. I don't want to get kicked. I begin thinking my own name in the rhythm of my running like a sort of chant. Lee Stevens, Lee Stevens, Lee Stevens. It's as if I've got to fight for my self-possession. I'm close to her now and I don't want to get flustered. I hear Robin's body, her measured breath. She is very, very steady. I see two things in rapid succession in my mind's eye. First I see the actress on the cover of the book. The crowd is looking up at her. This time the idea of the picture is somehow freakish to me, like a person who has grown into a giant or who is disproportionate in some way, perhaps mentally. Then I see again the picture of myself running. I hear the people in the stands. We are rounding the last turn of the second lap. I hear the crowd. I'm angry at the crowd. It's not their race. Watching Carborough

running ahead of me I'm angry. Lee Stevens, Lee Stevens, Lee Stevens. Something springs loose. I'm running well. I know what I've got left. I'm not watching myself run any more, I'm just running.

Several things are happening. The woman in first place is losing ground. Robin and I are both gaining on her and the Florida woman is moving up on me. She's not trying to pass me yet but she's getting into position. I have to turn my head to see what she's doing. She's in a good position to take me by surprise so I have to be careful. On the next turn I run as wide as possible in the inside lane but not wide enough to give her space to sneak in on my left. She won't get by me here but on the straightaway I have to be very cautious. I don't know where she's getting her drive. She could box me in for the last lap. I move a little to the right on the straightaway so that I'm balanced off Carborough's shoulder. I know that Robin can hear me, I'm that close, and this is why she has not turned her head to look. We pass in front of Jeffrey. He's moved in still closer to the track and I feel him standing there but at least I don't have that cloying clutching feeling. He's like one of the crowd and he's yelling too but his words blend with their yelling so that I can't understand him. Instead of trying to hear him I feel a bead of sweat drop down my temple and the left side of my face. My heart goes. We take the next turn, which is the beginning of the final lap.

The first runner has lost it. As soon as we get on the straightaway Robin moves out to pass her and I follow. The crowd surges with sound and movement. The life of all this movement seems to flicker in the air like sparks, like diamonds. The energy glints along the stands as we run in front of them, first one side of the field, then the other. We're warm and red. A white strap of Robin's bra shows on her browned shoulder. Sweat drops roll between my breasts. My face feels heavy, swollen. I move. I see a certain innocence in all this. After the complication of training I see the real innocence in the simplicity of what we are ultimately doing. We are synthesizing success into something palpable. The goal is actually simple. I only have to be the first woman to cross a line.

The last turn is coming up. My heart beats as if someone is thumping on my chest with the flat of the hand. I'm tired. I'm absolutely lonely. I have an absolute sense of myself. I stay on her heels around this turn. Attempting to pass here would use too much energy. I'm on her heels. I'm so absorbed in myself that she becomes an obstacle. Suddenly I see her in relation to me rather than myself in relation to her. I'm inside my running and I feel like a runner again. My body jolts in the strides. My hair brushes in rhythm. I control the torquing because the pain has started. It branches into my neck, around my throat, beneath my arms, tingles along my ribs. My legs prickles with warm sweat and they are aching too. I feel the complete outline of my lungs as they seem to dilate and implode.

I know the Floridian will have to make her move as soon as we are out of the turn. I move slightly to the right as we are in the final meters of the turn. The Floridian is so close, I hear her, that I become highly conscious of my back kick. I almost want to put more into it so that she will know to keep her distance. I'm sharp now, very sharp. I

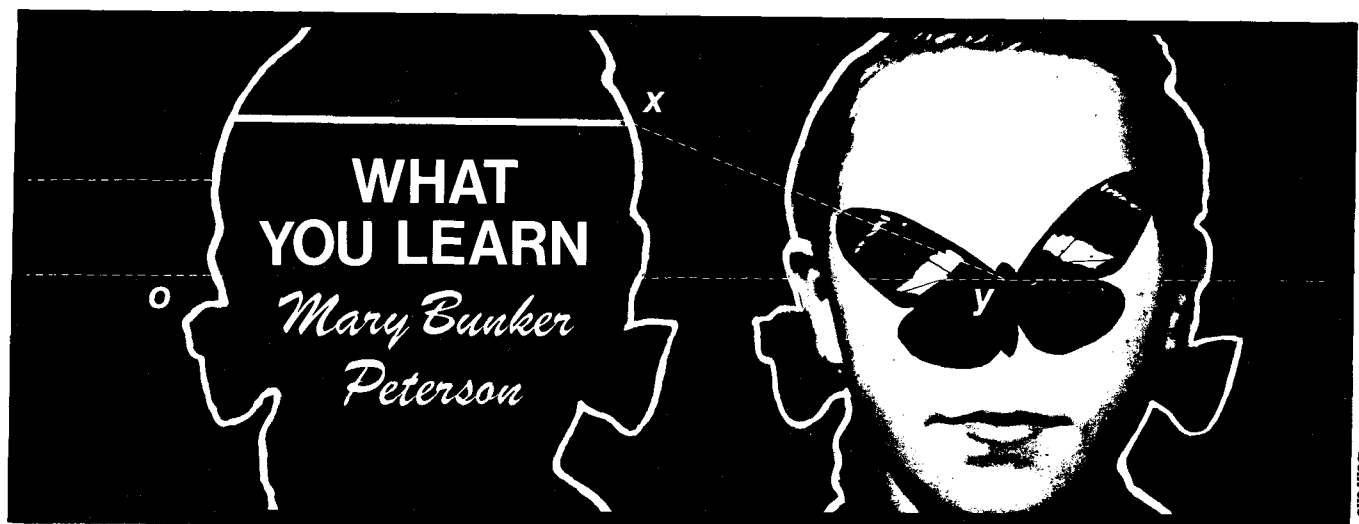
hear her taking in her breath and blowing out like a sleeping dreaming mutt. I move to edge her out. At this point my timing is more important than my speed. I've got a good momentum and my timing demands more concentration. I move that inch, those two inches to my right just as the turn is complete. I use this momentum to keep on for her attempt to pass. I beat the Florida runner. She's not going to be able to box me in the way it was in my nightmare and a strong feeling of release seems to blossom in my chest and the back of my head. I see the tape down the long bare runway of track. Excitement goes through me like a clean narrow bullet. It aches fast. I'm balanced off Carborough's shoulder once again but this is the final stretch, the straightaway. She turns her head quickly, frightened. I've been on her tail before but not like this and she knows it. I know I've got a small kick left. It's all I've got so I can't even worry about what she's got. It doesn't really matter.

We both increase the pace. The race is totally ours now. I won't even turn my head again for the Florida runner because it would only be a wild curiosity and would set me off my pace. My nervousness explodes again, again and yet it is exhausted. I feel slow. This is all I've got left, I'm down to my core. The long white tape looks somehow placid across the finish line. It looks indifferent. It makes me angry. I want to smash through it and wad it in a ball and swallow it.

We put what we've got left into it. Already feeling the plunge through the tape. Wrapping around my waist, hips, almost tickling me. The pleasure of it. I don't smell anything. I don't hear anything. I see that tape, so placid it makes me angry.

Then we're on top of it, it's meters away, it's like our motion is torturously slowed. I struggle with it. My lungs and heart are taking over. I must be calm. I must be calm. I'm off her right shoulder. We almost touch. I sense her right elbow out in front of me by inches, by millimeters. I see her elbow touch the tape, the white against her tanned arm just like her bra strap against her skin, like a ribbon. It breaks over both of us, wafting calmly as if it too feels the pull of our motion, the strain of gravity, it goes slowly and curls. I'm that close. They have to check the photographs to be positive she won it.

I stand on the track and meet its starkness. Pain cuts down my throat. Carborough is walking, warming down. The photographs go up to the booth in a box on a wire and they announce it. She skips once and begins her slow victory lap. Her face straight, she looks a little irritated. I know she's tired. I feel good. She waves perfunctorily and I watch the crowd applauding her. I was running out there. I look at the crowd and picture the cover of Robin's book. It's a stupid dream. It's nothing. I feel an absolute joy. I've never had such a complete sense of myself. It's a sense of ownership. Maybe it's not going to last long but right now I've got it. I watch her run and I look at the people in the crowd and quietly I begin to laugh. Because all along I've been viewing all of it from the middle-distance. I'm going to run the final. Tomorrow morning early I'm going to find my keys and get down into my MG and drive out someplace quiet. Then I'll do my workout and enjoy myself a little. □



These days everything depressed her: the color of her two and a half year old son's eyes and the way the new baby's hair was silky and wet sticking to his forehead when he slept, and the cans of baby food in a row on the counter, and all the memories of birth when Richard was there with the camera and she—dizzy—imagined herself in a star role in an art film until it was over, so that even the whimperings sounded to her own ears rehearsed. It depressed her that the plants were losing their lower leaves—from overwatering, her mother said—and it depressed her that the cats had to be kept in the basement away from the boys; had always since they moved to this house been kept in the basement, until now the big tiger was so wild you could not pat him when you went down with his food, and the small tiger shrank away as though he had forgotten the lap, the cream, the hand on his back. The small cat had a wide flat face and seemed always to be grinning, only the eyes showed he was afraid. His face depressed her too and she fought the wish to throw the food against it and break it up with the grey mess of cat food against the fur.

Richard was probably telling people she was too old—was this the reason he gave for leaving her? She was six years older. When they were first married, ten years ago when she was twenty-six, it had seemed not to matter. Now this small fact, like the other building blocks of small facts, seemed very important indeed. They all mattered and she didn't know how to weigh or arrange them. At the top of the stack each day was the one that for unknown reasons bobbed up. The television program talked about the new independence of women and she wondered if Richard considered her a "new woman" and disliked her independence. Well, she answered to the space he had left, if you look at this house and all the responsibilities, you will surely see that I'm not independent at all. The opposite: everything was to be cared for, plants, sons, cats, food that spoiled on the shelves, dishes and pans from the beginning. The marriage was over, though, and like the carnival lot after the show has left town, there was nothing left but wagon tracks and peanut shells. It had been very colorful and outrageous and interesting but now it was over and that was that.

On the telephone she had not asked after Richard, but

Craig had volunteered that he was out and in the evening his plane would leave for London. It sounded very glamorous and she wondered whether Richard would enjoy London, as he had enjoyed Buenos Aires. When he toured in South America he had brought her a chipped emerald ring, very cheap down there but more costly in the States, one large emerald and two smallish ones. They had looked to her extraordinarily green—green like plastic could be green—but she wore the ring and did not tell him it reminded her of something you get in the Cracker-jack box. She did not tell him it was loose on her finger and she had to stack it with others to wear it at all. She did not say the ring felt more unlike her than anything she had owned.

Craig was a kind person. That was a surprise. He was a musician like Richard but although they lived together now, Richard said they didn't see each other much. Craig was twenty-six and she was thirty-six and she had listened to the dissonance of their voices on the telephone. I sound like somebody's mother, she had thought.

There was something intemperate in her features, something excessive in the size of her mouth, and the baby had it too and she wondered if that was the reason Richard left them. She stood beside the crib watching him sleep, fearing that moment when he should wake and recognize her—he had only just begun doing it—and smile to know she was there. The first time her older son did it, she had been shocked to know she was somebody's mother.

But he slept on, two fingers pushed into his mouth, his breathing so slight she studied the rise of his chest to know that he lived.

This one had been as easy to conceive as the other was, and the other was a surprise since all her adult life she had believed herself to be infertile. With the first one and then the second she had learned she was regular with ovulation as a rabbit, and she bred as easily and as mindlessly. One did not have to pay attention, to get pregnant. One need not enjoy conception. The body went ahead and did it for you and you could be present or not, your mind could be off, it didn't matter. Still she was happy to remember that with the first, she and Richard had

believed they loved each other very much, and with the second they had laughed because it was so easy. During the nine months after the second, when she was carrying him and knowing he was a boy too and Richard said she couldn't know that, Richard had accused her that it was not his child. Then he began the nasty little affair with the blond, so it seemed to her now that the conception of this child was when the ending of herself and Richard began. Shirley was the kind of tacky little blond you never expected your husband to like, because she was a joke of sexuality and a caricature of what men wanted. A discount version of a Hollywood blond. At parties she giggled and sucked on her lower lip. She had thought Richard had better taste than that. But then maybe sex was as mindless as conception was, and the body responded to what the body recognized: plump behind, pushed-up breasts, wet red mouth.

"Don't sleep," she said to the sleeping baby. She put her hand inside his crib, into the circle of his private oblivion, and stroked his hair with her fingers. He shuddered.

She put both hands and arms inside to lift him out, feeling his weight suspended sleeping from her hands, all loose infant weight, then tensing as he came awake. His eyes squeezed tighter shut then open, and his mouth made a round oh. He did not fuss as the first one had, and she carried him downstairs nestling him with both arms against her, then propping him up against her shoulder. Her breasts ached and the right one was dripping. His hands caught into her hair and pulled, the way the children of cave women had done, simply holding on, the body knowing what to do, the body knowing everything.

The older one played on the porch floor and the baby nuzzled her and blew milk bubbles against her skin, and she watched through the vines on the porch. The neighbor girls were lying in the sun reading on the next lawn. They looked so fine, so healthy, they were almost brighter than the light. Both girls had blond hair that they had learned to toss, and their mouths were spoiled and pouty, and they were good at looking up with veiled eyes from under their hair. To be fourteen and sixteen was to be firm and sturdy, with strong straight legs and smooth muscles good to touch. They liked to sit in their shorts with their legs apart, and they had pretty hips, and when they laughed it was without self-consciousness. She thought that if this was a society where older men initiated young girls, perhaps Richard would have been happy enough with the neighbor girls and he would not have left them. Her milky breast sagged flatly against the sleeping baby now, and she watched the girls and thought if she was a man she would wish to make love to them. They were not people yet; they were clean and defenseless, the way she might herself have been once, though she could not remember.

Now she wondered if she shouldn't get cleaned up, but she could see no reason to. The baby was done nursing and she changed him and powdered him and put

him back in the crib. He would not sleep but he would watch the twirling mobile and make noises to himself. The older one hung along behind her; he was always so quiet. Her hair was not set, though washed yesterday morning, and the clothes were too comfortable to change. Craig would bring the house mortgage that Richard had taken by mistake; he didn't mind running the errand, he said.

Advance Billing, she would have called it to Richard. You tell a person about another person and it amounts to advance billing, and when you meet you must decide whether the cover of the book reflects or does not represent its contents, you have to judge whether the observations on glossy paper are all advertising stuff or the real thing, you have to wade through the words to get to the truth of a person. It was the reason she never let him go on about people—though he always liked to—because she wanted to decide herself. Richard would have told Craig what she was like. Richard would have given him an image and she wanted to imagine what it might be. She would know, though. His eyes would tell it. He would be nervous.

In the kitchen her son tried to pull himself up on the table. Light slanted in over the table and ignited the glass bowls, passing through the blue one to throw colored light against the warm light wood. She had always liked the blue bowl more than Richard had. Had liked light through things. In the plants it made shadows of leaves. Once she read to him the information that people who have been blind all their lives and gain vision through surgery see only light for many days; the world seems brilliant to them. It intrigued her to think one might see only light and dark, have full vision but not be able to use it. Also when you are blind you only know what is near and what you can touch. When you get sight you realize the scope of the world, depths of space, distances. The world seems at first large and threatening. You wish for blindness again to manage the world.

But then he was at the door; she heard his footsteps on the slate steps.

She put the older one in his crib too and tried not to listen to him crying when she went downstairs again. When she brought the coffee to Craig, she saw them from the outside at the table—as though it was a film and they were actors.

At the table was a woman of thirty-six who had long wavy hair down to the middle of her back, and odd blue eyes that were lighter in color in the morning. This woman was wearing a Mexican shirt with spots of milk on the breast, and a colored sash, and loose-fitting pants and beads on a leather cord around her wrist. She was not wearing a wedding ring, or any ring at all. She looked rather like an artist, though too tired to be an artist. Rather like a woman with two children who had been an artist once three or four lives ago, and now didn't have time to do anything about it.

The young man did not look especially like a classical guitarist, but there was no look to musicians anyhow. He had light brown, blond-streaked hair that fell in a piece over his forehead, and he kept nervously pushing it back,

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and behind the hair were warm honey-colored eyes you'd want to look at for a long time if you could see them oftener.

His mouth was saying he had not liked living alone. "Last winter was probably the loneliest time of my life," it said. "I was in a beach house. The weather was bad in December—you remember it?—and in the afternoons when I had nothing to do I sat looking out the windows at snow and the water pounding, and there was seaweed on the beach, and the ocean was awful."

"I've always loved the ocean," the woman said.

"Everybody says that."

"I can't be near water without walking into it," she said.

"In the winter the ocean changes."

"But when we lived off the beach," she told him, "I used to make bread and knead it in rhythm to the waves breaking on the rocks."

"That's different."

"I was thinking, your music..."

There was one of those silences when they had been talking about important things but objectively, as if they were patient observers of themselves. They did not look at each other.

"What did you learn that winter?" she said then. She felt very old, as old as a hundred mothers.

He stopped leaning against the table and sat up.

"That it's better to be with somebody."

"With anybody?"

"When you share something, it's better. Being alone is like punishing yourself."

"But you don't see Richard much," she said.

"It doesn't matter."

"Why is everything we learn like a cliché?" she asked him. "As though everybody else knew it first."

"Richard's all right," he said.

She listened, and the oldest one wasn't crying now. "When I lived alone I got rid of something too," she said. She told him about the winter of the first year she was in college, when she had not felt at all like being in school and the University seemed enormous, and the bridges between the campuses seemed too tall, and when the leaves were off the trees the grounds looked stark and noble and frightening. She had one room in an old house and you had to climb three flights of unlit stairs to reach it, and she decided that winter to wear black only, and powdered her face nearly white, and went to her classes like that, and nobody spoke to her. Said how she realized that had been a ridiculous dramatization of herself and she would not do it that way again. There were certain things she learned and one was not to make a theatre of her life and another was that you needn't punish yourself unduly. She had refused to turn on the lights all winter, and made herself sit in the dark awake until she was finally so tired she slept. Although when she woke she could not remember sleeping.

He seemed to be hurt by her story and she couldn't understand why, and he stood and came around the table and put his hands on her shoulders. They were gentle hands that made her forget suddenly what she had meant to say next, although there was more to the story, and she

closed her eyes and opened them again waiting until he would stop.

"Don't be so hard on yourself," he said. "It's not fair."

"It's been different for you, Craig," she said. "Some people have to be hard on themselves to learn. But you, you were raised by a mother who loved you and you had a good time when you were a boy, and when you went to school you got A's on all your drawings and when you were older you had a girlfriend right away and she was all crazy in love with you."

She seemed outside herself, watching them. She remembered with him that love-making could be sweet and even delicate, that it was possible for a man's hands to treat her as though she was fragile, so that she felt fragile, and that when she was lifted by him to fit against him there was smoothness and warmth and the whisper of his breathing in her ear, and she wondered how he could be so young and know how to make love this way, which must be the way the neighbor girls would make love if they did. Maybe she knew it once and forgot it in all the years she and Richard had crawled into bed together yawning, rolled together like two people who had a responsibility to be close, spoke little, fell apart again and into separate silences and into the distance of sleep until morning when they were formal as strangers.

She lay next to him thinking of all the things she would not tell him although he seemed to expect her to tell him everything. At the end of the week she would apply for Welfare and file for divorce and most likely she would not manage to meet the mortgage on the house, and love had nothing to do with her life any more though there were shards of love still in her feelings toward the boys and in her care of small things around the house like the plants and the poor cats. That she had thought of cutting her hair to a length more chic and modern but that the notion of it bored her too much to bother; that in another six years—give or take a year—she would go into menopause and dry up and not much care; that at night when she couldn't sleep she often went to check the boys and then out onto the porch where she sat with wine looking at the moon through the vines; that she had never been to London and could only imagine it, and it was bittersweet to her that Richard's music would go so well and he was giving concerts in England to small interested audiences; that perhaps one day he would give concerts to larger audiences and the blond or the redhead or the brunette who followed him around then would sit in the front row and think that he belonged to her only. One had somehow to deal with all the fragments of what one knew, and make them into something that made sense, but time built up on you and there seemed to be much to unlearn and she was too tired to bother. She listened for her sons and he lay warmly beside her wanting to talk about the next time he visited, and she tried but she could not hear him, and love seemed to have nothing to do with anything, although when he put his arms around her and pulled her to him another time the baby began suddenly to cry and she felt the milk let go in her breasts against his chest sticky and warm and she was startled to find relaxing toward him her body that seemed to have its own life now, that was such a stranger.

OCCUPATION

At the beginning, the very beginning, I used to go to Azul once a week. Almost at the entrance to the town I would stop at the Progreso Café and, depending on the season, have either a coffee or a draft beer. That got me ready to turn off onto the improved road to Alma Muerta and to confront myself with Las Acacias. I say “confront myself” because I know the end of this story and so I can’t write it any other way. Las Acacias was the richest estate in the area and I had inherited it for the simple reason that in my family procreation had always been an almost miraculous act—if not an impossible one. I was the only offspring in a family of seven brothers who had married several times in a useless search for descendants who were always denied to them: not even an abortion or a frustrated pregnancy. They couldn’t make up their minds about adoption, perhaps because they saw in me the miracle—albeit a remote one—of their own flesh, and subconsciously they were stubbornly resolved to maintain their inheritance at any price.

As a child, I learned to offer each one of them a quota of affection they had never dared to dream of. I obliged them to attend my birthday parties and school parties and I would abandon the most fascinating games in order to be able to bore myself with them. I remembered their saints’ days with incredible precision; produced laughter or tears opportunely, according to the stories they told or the sad events which befell them; I’d circulate my polo trophies from house to house, like the monstrance on Holy Thursday. I arranged things so that none of them ever argued with me. On trips, the same affection in the body of the letter, the same tearfulness in the closings. My parents skillfully died young, to give me the halo of being orphaned, so necessary in making them feel responsible for my existence. And they were Las Acacias. No discussion of wills, no wondering about parcelling out. It was mine, completely mine, from the instant that Nicasio, my uncle, the eldest, got shot by a bullet fired by a peasant from the lands south of the ranch, leaving him paralyzed in a chair. “A matter of investments,” it was said. And Perón was blamed. The affair was never mentioned again.

From that day on I offered to give up my law studies—after two years of study I had only taken the qualifying examinations—and take charge of Las Acacias. They felt sorry for me and regretted my having to deal with “those people” and made out their wills in my name. That is, they gave it to me while they still lived.

But wise, prudent, far-seeing, wizards, fortune tellers, they introduced me to María Inés, my wife. Also of my blood: a distant relationship, perhaps invented. I never had to pretend to them that I was happy: I fell in love with her mysterious walk, her golden skin, and the fragile being who wore English tweed suits, cashmere sweaters and my mother’s genuine pink pearls. She laughed at my stories when I tried to entertain my uncles and she was modestly silent in the act of making love.

Naturally, we had no children. We accepted it as the mandate of fate. She didn’t ask me to visit doctors or *curanderas*. From time to time I would find her looking at the figure of a child on the cover of some magazine, which she would hide surreptitiously.

We travelled a lot at that time because I had taken some Charolais bulls to Las Acacias, introducing the breed into the country, and Paris gave María Inés a chance to visit Givenchy’s or Casini’s and to spend afternoons in Rumpermayer’s and for me to ship my bulls on the *Giulio Cesare* on the return trip home. It’s fun to travel with a full-blooded bull on a transatlantic ship and to keep an eye on him during the crossing: a chance to go down to the hold with my friends and show them that future drawing card for the La Cabaña restaurant. Because that is certainly where he would wind up.

I said that I would go to Las Acacias almost every week. I’d spend the night and return to Buenos Aires late the following afternoon. I used to sit on the porch on the west side, in a wicker chair with a fan-shaped filigreed back. I hadn’t liked horseback riding since that time when I couldn’t get my foot out of the stirrup and my horse had paraded me, exhibited me to the grandstands down the whole length of the polo field. Although I hadn’t even been hurt, I felt that I’d never be able to get over the shame and anger the animal had provoked. After all, I’d given them, my uncles, some trophies and enough emotional moments.

The problems which were brought to me were already solved by Padilla, the overseer. His father, his grandfather and his great-grandfather had been in the house since the epoch of General Roca. They rarely went to the city. I remember having heard my father say, “Sometime we’ll have to give them the house they live in or the land they live on.” But no one ever got around to doing it, nor did they demand it. During the difficult times of the dictatorship—the second one, Perón’s—, more patronal than the owners, they joined the conservative party of Azul as a show of loyalty and adhesion to their employers.

An apparently unequalled misfortune united us and, in turn, made them submit themselves to me—or so I thought then: the fact that his offspring were exclusively feminine. His six grown-up daughters had made him become unsociable and meditative. The man would tell me about his strange philosophy, after going over the accounts with me and informing me of the deaths among the herd. A herd which grew and multiplied, favored by good years and by governments, after the fall of Perón, which were convinced that the wealth of the nation lay in our farmlands, blessed lands like those of the province of Buenos Aires.

But to get back to Aristóbulo Padilla—so he was named, in honor of my grandfather. He was a man about forty-five, neither too tall nor too short. Small eyes, a fine mouth and big, deformed hands, accustomed to childbirth as well as to using the whip for breaking colts or punishing his daughters. Because that was the tragedy of Aristóbulo Padilla: “What are they good for, for whorehouses or for some bum to run off with . . .” During those delirious exchanges of confidences which took place at dusk he would say to me from time to time:

“To think that others possess one’s daughters, your own blood. To think that they were born and that you educate them for someone else’s satisfaction. You’re lucky, don Marcelo, that your wife isn’t pregnant. What if

you had a girl? Why didn't I drown them at birth, like kittens? If they were men, it would all be different; this land might be mine." The last statement slipped out once and, thinking better of it, he corrected himself: "Your dead father and your uncles are lucky to have had you, at least. What would have happened to Las Acacias?"

Las Acacias! Perhaps the most beautiful ranch house in the southern part of the province, and surrounded by two hundred tenant farms. A one-floor colonial structure with porches with tall Doric columns, with balustrades on the terrace. It was always pink, the way Basaldúa painted it recently, a painting which is in the main dining room, which is always closed, with the chairs pulled up to the table, waiting for their only table companions—ghosts or witches at midnight, because the house was built to entertain phantoms. Never, not even in its best times, was it inhabited continuously. Its owners lived in Paris or London and the house passed from one generation to another. It was used for convalescences which would be followed later by mother-of-pearl chips at the gambling tables at Enghein.

When I arrived, they would prepare the room I had as a child, next to the servants' room. I also had lunch with them during that brief weekly stay.

I don't remember very well the day they announced—supposedly because of some spots of humidity—that they had moved me to the room that once was my parents'. I remember that it was a warm summer night; pink mosquito netting covered the mahogany columns of the bed and heightened the beauty of that room, which had always resembled a bridal chamber. Entering the room after so many years produced a strange uneasiness in me. The sound of the crystals of the chandeliers, the song of the cicadas, the cries of the tern birds and magpies were more intense. The grill and the metallic tulle of the windows did not conceal the eyes of the owl from me.

With the lights out, I undressed and crawled between the linen sheets, which were cooler and smoother than usual. For the first time I regretted that María Inés was not with me: auto trips made her nauseous and, like me, she didn't like to travel by plane, especially not on the route to the south of the province.

I wasn't used to going to bed completely naked. "Colds can get in through your elbows and knees," they used to say to me when I was a child. But that night, because I was afraid there would be mosquitoes, I had turned out the light before looking for my pajama top and then I couldn't find it.

The feel of my naked body on the cold sheets, I must confess, took me back to my infancy: memories of solitary, fortuitous pleasures, which disappeared from memory and were replaced by others, since they, my uncles, took care to provide me with young servants or first-class prostitutes who would appear before I suffered insomnia.

I rolled over on the bed; perhaps it was the second

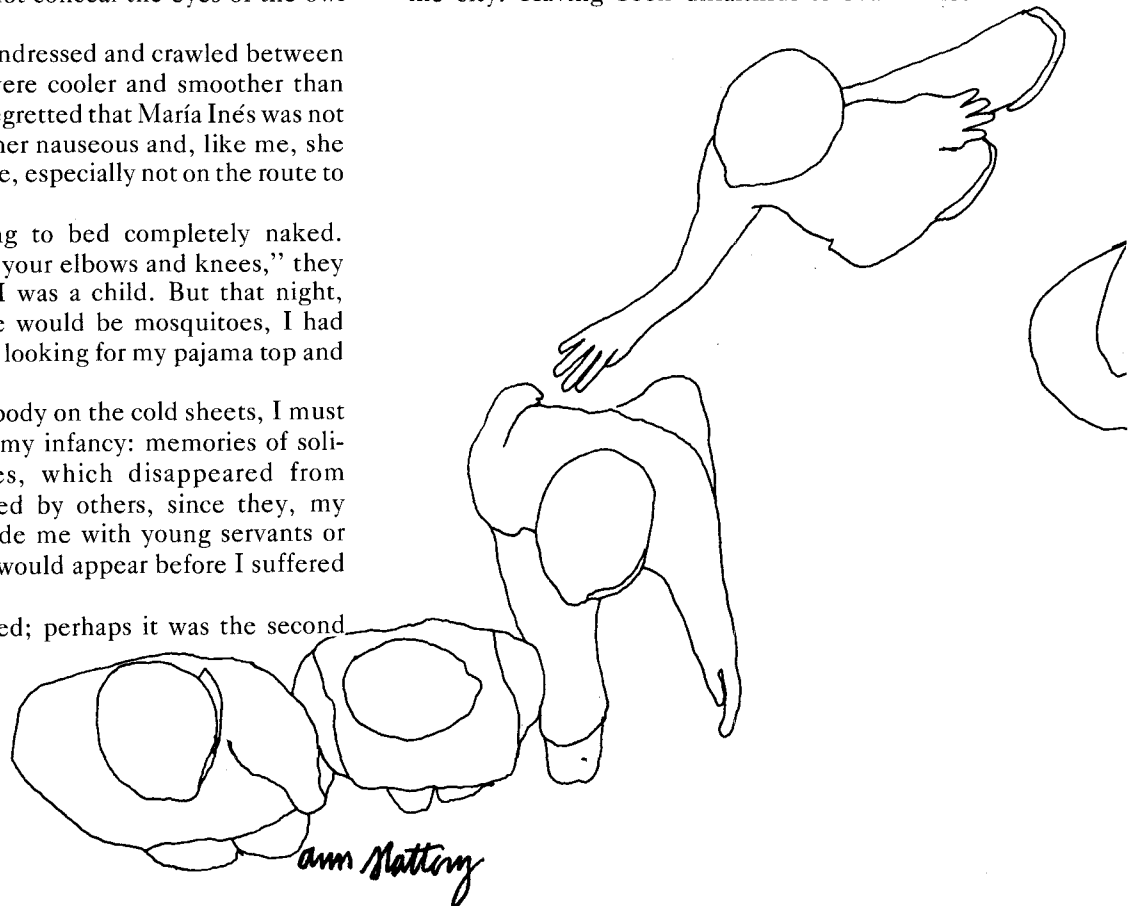
time I rolled to the right, perhaps it was to the left, on the heart side. Because the bridal bed was wide and soft, with no unexpected deep holes or pockets. I turned to the left, to the heart side, to repeat, and I encountered a warm, naked body. First there was an embrace, then came the fragrance, like fresh baked bread, unmistakable. I didn't discover its nakedness until my hand, paralyzed by the initial, disagreeable surprise, verified its passive immobility. Nor did I try to turn on the light to reveal the face that belonged to that body. I was afraid that it would disappear or that the light would burn it, the way it consumes butterflies and fireflies.

My hand responded to a movement of her head. Her hair was spread over my chest, like the first movement of a strange rite. But it was my hands which wanted to examine the body, to identify it. In vain. Then, resolutely, I tried to turn on the light, but her arm stopped me energetically and her mouth, with provocative insistence, moved about my chest. Afterward, I only remember that I sank into an abyss which I never knew existed until then. The flesh which pressed itself on me was smooth and vibrant, young and yet expert, virgin but wise. I fell into a deep sleep where reality and fantasy could not be identified.

The sun falling on my pillow woke me up and my arm sought the body which had slept at my side. All that remained of it was its fragrance of fresh baked bread and the warmth that revealed that the bed had been abandoned recently.

I had breakfast in the kitchen, a hungry dog, ill-humored and sad, as if I had fallen into the trap of an infantile erotic dream. I left for Buenos Aires immediately, without finding out which ranch girl it might have been.

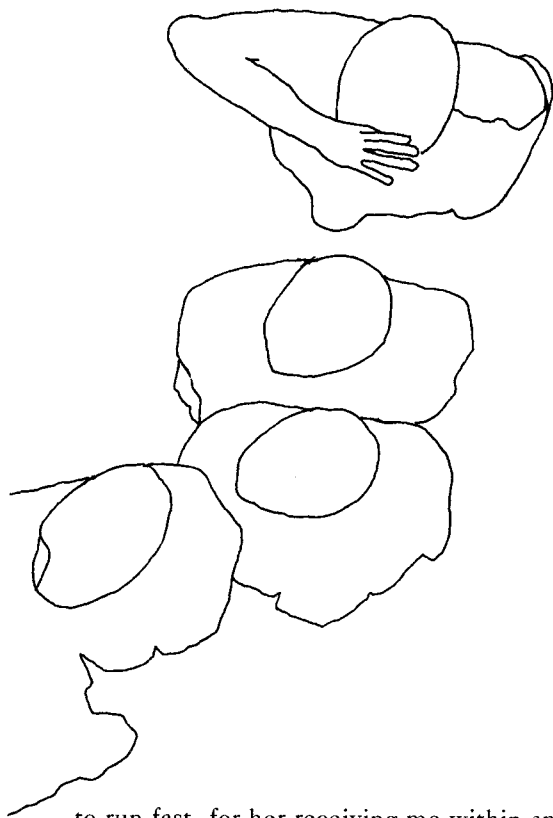
During the whole week I wandered silently around the city. Having been unfaithful to María Inés didn't



bother me, but having succumbed to sorcery did. Because I began to count the days, then the hours, until I would return to Las Acacias.

That day, right after I arrived on the ranch, I sat down on the porch and waited for Padilla. I hastily signed the necessary checks, listened to his laments about aphtha and locusts; without eating, I got into bed, to wait, in what was now definitely my room. First with the light on, then off. The crickets, two birds and owls returned. After night came, I fell asleep; again I rolled onto my heart's side, again I found the naked body, calmly, confidently stretched out at my side. This time I didn't sense on her body the odor of baked bread but of rain water, of hair washed in rain water. My first gesture was to turn on the light, but her arm stopped me energetically: this time desire was so imperious, so unrecognizable within me that I let myself be swept away again by that smooth, virginal flesh; and that straight, thick, perhaps softer hair which was spread over my chest.

She had her way again; after arousing my desire several times and not answering my questions—each time I was more grateful for her letting or permitting my blood



to run fast, for her receiving me within an abyss which I felt for the first time as happiness, with no doubts about my fertility—she succeeded in plunging me into a deep sleep. And I confess I no longer wanted to find out, because I feared nothing as much as seeing her disappear. I was satisfied to be part of an act of sorcery, of some strange witchcraft, to incarnate the materialization of a legend or of an animic indifference of some exquisite lover, in that historic bed. I forgot or hid the fact that my parents had also inherited the bed and that perhaps I was conceived there. Then I didn't try to turn the light on again.

BEATRIZ GUIDO is a well-known Argentine novelist. The House of the Angel and End of a Day have been published in the U.S.

This time I woke up happy. I had breakfast on the porch and listened to Padilla's confidences, thinking already about the next time I would return. I didn't dare attempt an encounter the following night because it might break the spell.

I spent the days in Buenos Aires doing useless jobs, to make the days shorter. And my affection for María Inés and my uncles doubled, because I felt a need to return the happiness which never left me.

So I spent several months, always finding, when I turned on my heart's side on the bridal bed at Las Acacias, a divinity which was always different, more knowing each time, more precise and cunning, as it denied and yielded in the game of love. Each time a different fragrance alternated with the fresh baked bread—the odor of wet grass, well water, biscuits with anise; at times the hair was pulled back, other times straighter, once the skin had goosebumps from the cool breeze, other times it was smooth and uncreased, peach down. On a certain occasion I was startled because I believed I could detect on her a strange roundness of the belly, but that only stimulated my desire and buried the rest in oblivion.

It coincided with a trip to Europe: Padilla urged that we cross the last Charolais with a first generation one in order to show it at the Rural Fair at the start of that winter.

I forgot to say that I had already left everything in his hands; I had given him a power of attorney, so that I wouldn't have to spend the afternoons signing checks and papers and so from early in the afternoon, already in my room, I would be able to wait for my miraculous guest, that person invited from the shadows, the materialization of the desire of those of my breed, perhaps.

I left for Europe, trembling and uncertain. Something had taken hold of me, preventing me from finding any happiness away from Las Acacias. Nevertheless, the trip was prolonged over several months. From the Hotel Principe de Gales, everything seemed to me like a fantastic story which I had read once in Borges or perhaps Bioy, whose fields bordered on our own. I became ashamed and thought that the workers on the ranch had played a dirty trick on me. However, when I returned, after kissing my uncles I flew in a Piper Cub from the port of Buenos Aires to Las Acacias.

I didn't find Padilla or the workers; I felt happy, closed in the room. I couldn't or shouldn't do anything but wait.

Night came and I again was enclosed in her arms and pressed against the woman who now laughed and laughed, perhaps without fear now of being identified.

The following morning, the unfamiliar crying, screaming and howling of several children awoke me. I left my room, furious, following the shouts. In the armchairs of filigreed wicker on the porches, swaddled like the children of the remote and perhaps invented ancestors of my family in the photographs in the livingroom, there were four or five or six children whose crying did not succeed in disfiguring my features and they revealed my skin, white, transparent, Bourbon, easily recognizable.

I ran to the kitchen and found no one. In the dining-room I discovered Padilla's six daughters. Afterward, I followed their laughter, found them everywhere, spying on me; behind the doors, their children, mine, on the consoles, on the porcelain cats and on the Sèvres gazelles. Then I understood that they had occupied the house, perhaps the land too, which no longer belonged to me.

(Translated, from the Spanish, by John G. Copeland)

Chub Tandy was going to work on Tuesday morning even though a sharp, penetrating pain in his side kept him away from his breakfast. The pain had attacked him before dawn and driven him to the bathroom for a double-dose of aspirin. The aspirin failed. He drank two cups of coffee while leaning on the kitchen counter. He took his Zippo apart and filled it with fluid. Linda, his wife, said he wasn't taking care of himself, too much drinking coffee and smoking. He left everything up to her. Maybe he should try decaffeinated. For a man of thirty-four, he should be more hearty and she had a right to be concerned. He hadn't touched his toast. Did he expect his children to eat cold toast? They wouldn't.

He felt worse when he got to the plant. He vomited the coffee. One minute he was cold, the next he was hot and wiping the sweat from his forehead. He pressed the pain until it eased. His supervisor noticed Chub's pallor and frequent trips to the bathroom. He asked what was wrong. Chub thought maybe it was the flu. He would laugh if he thought it was a hernia. The pain subsided when he bent over. "Blue Cross," said Harry. "Don't worry when you have Blue Cross." Harry called the office for a secretary to take Chub to Methodist Hospital.

Sandy, the secretary, nervously helped Chub into her car. She was in payroll and only spoke to men in the plant on payday. Sandy put on her driving glasses and gunned out of the parking lot. She assumed Chub was dying so she honked the horn and made small moans at every red light. It was snowing and the streets were slick with slush. She drove with one foot on the accelerator and one on the brake. Chub bent over and clutched the dash. Sandy turned on the radio and the heater. Chub turned his attention from his pain to Sandy's knees. They were beautiful, strong and tense. Sandy never once looked directly at her passenger.

Chub got out of the car at the emergency entrance. Before he'd walked the ten steps to the door, Sandy was on her way back to the plant. He felt small and abandoned. His vision grayed as if something, someone, was vacuuming up all of the color around Methodist Hospital. Chub expected to be arrested at any moment for the color crime. Bashfully, he entered the emergency room.

A nurse with a stethoscope bouncing from breast to breast approached the confused arrival. "Yes?" she said in a nice way. Chub explained his pain in a limp voice. The nurse led him to a narrow bed on wheels and summoned a doctor.

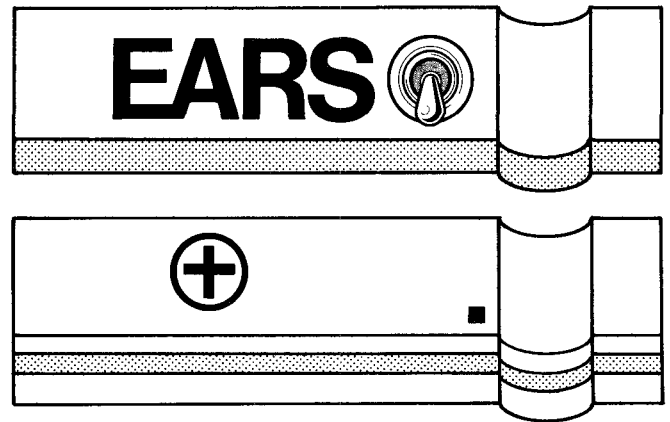
The doctor opened Chub's coat, pushed on Chub's stomach, and said, "Appendicitis. Routine. I've done six in one day. But it might be tough on you. It usually is on a man your age." Chub was given over to a different nurse who gave him a pill. He tried several times to swallow the pill as she filled out a form on a clipboard. Finally he crushed it with his teeth and gulped down the water.

Sitting in a chair, Chub called Linda. She said maybe she could get over in an hour if she could find a sitter.

"Go to the plant and pick up the car first," he said.

"But I want to see you before they take you in."

"Don't make it an argument. My God, I'm sick."



"You know," she said finally, "that comes from chewing your nails."

Chub hung up the phone. If at all possible, it was better to endure the pain alone. He had to concentrate on himself to get through the worst. He gave himself up to the hospital.

The surgeon, Dr. Gesme, entered in a ski jacket. He removed his stocking cap. He smelled of bacon. "So, appendix," he said smiling down at Chub.

"I guess," replied Chub helplessly. The attempt at conversation made him sick, afraid to ask questions.

Dr. Gesme pressed. "Appendix. Well, you don't need it. Little finger on the cecum, this long." He spread his long fingers about three inches. "It doesn't do anything. We'll just go in and snip it off." He conferred with the nurses and disappeared down the tiled corridor.

Chub was wheeled away. At 10:35, Chub Tandy's appendix was removed, covered by Blue Cross. It was routine.

It was dark outside when he opened his eyes, but he'd been listening. Carts, trays, crepe soles, paper slippers, small talk about cars not starting, needlepoint patterns, Weight Watchers, parent-teacher conferences. The antiseptic atmosphere was occasionally pierced by unfamiliar strains of perfume. A nurse entered Chub's room and took his wrist in her cool hand. He opened his eyes and watched her stomach. Linda appeared in the doorway with her coat on. Chub cringed at the invasion.

"Well, aren't we lucky?" said the nurse. She shook a thermometer and gave it a professional stare.

"I guess I could've died," Chub said.

"No, I mean you're all alone. This is a semi-private."

Chub tipped his head and saw that the bed across the room was empty and the dividing curtain pulled aside. He closed his lips on the thermometer. It tasted like cloves. Linda leaned on the bed and kissed his forehead. She combed his hair with her fingers and wiped something from his cheek. She said she'd been there since noon and now that he was showing some life, she had to go home to the children and explain the operation. Jody was too young to understand but Tom would. Notifying the family would take at least an hour. Linda took the thermometer from Chub's mouth and handed it to the nurse.

A STORY BY GORDON MENNENGA



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“Call Harry at home,” Chub said. “Tell him I’ll be out for a week or so. But don’t let him come out to see me. No reason to.” Chub swallowed rapidly, fighting nausea. The sheets crackled when he moved his legs.

“Much pain?” asked Linda.

“Umm.”

“Do you want anything? Cigarettes?”

“No questions. No visitors. Nothing. Please, go home.”

Chub closed his eyes, shutting out Linda who was in a whispering conference with the nurses. She came back to the bed. He could feel her stare, smell her presence. What did she want? She tested his forehead and pulled the sheets up around his neck. She kissed him and said goodbye. Chub lifted his arm, twisted his hand and let it drop again.

A coolness clung to his side, a constant breeze on wet skin. He touched his abdomen cautiously and wondered if he was losing blood on the sheet. He imagined a ragged incision from which his life oozed while the nurses chirped in the hallway. Were his pants in the closet? Was his billfold safe? Was he expected to get to the bathroom on his own? Was the bedpan mandatory? He put his hand over his eyes. The wind blew snow and sleet against the window. The driveway and sidewalk would have to be shoveled in the morning.

Wednesday. Chub’s will was usurped by the mechanics of recuperation. He didn’t do anything unless he was told to. Dr. Gesme stopped by to inspect the incision. His manner was reassuring; Gesme said, “Good,” and left. The other bed was still empty. Chub studied the painting on the wall. A clown and two toothy children were forever in the act of adoring three balloons. Chub rented a remote control device from the TV man. He watched soap operas, two of which took place in green hospital rooms where the patients were in comas or labor. The nurse attending the man in the coma spoke no lines but had a splendid body that might have excited Chub had he not feared doing damage to his incision. He dozed. He ate soft food. He sat up and studied the shopping mall

across the street through the narrow window. He read *Time* and listened to the traffic in the hall, suspecting that each hard-soled approach was Linda’s. She came at 3:00, bringing a fruit basket from her parents and a funny card the children had drawn the night before.

“Don’t you wish you had a roommate?” she asked.

“No. I’d rather watch TV.”

“Don’t watch too much. It’s hard on the eyes.”

“I’ve been sleeping a lot,” said Chub. “Shut the door when you leave. People keep looking in.”

Linda looked hurt. Chub would have paid money for solitude. She put his clean underwear in the closet, combed his hair, talked about the various reactions of the family to his near-tragic operation, and left him with a kiss. As soon as she was gone, he felt like apologizing to her. He was helpless, he wanted to tell her, he wasn’t himself. He was sorry.

He remembered Linda’s stay in the hospital when Jody was born. She’d been in labor for six hours. When it was over, he’d gone home to sleep. Later he visited her expecting to be greeted by a joyous wife. Instead she’d become hostile and had burst into loud sobs. They argued over the name. Milk leaked from her breasts, her bones and joints ached, and the doctor hadn’t been to see her. Chub had leaned against the wall without speaking, taking it all in, willing to admit he couldn’t understand her special agony.

It’s best to blame the hospital, he thought. Even the windows look like gun slits. Chub rubbed away what could have been tears.

Chub tired of *The Tonight Show* and shut it off. He wanted to call Linda but feared waking her. He rolled on to his good side. He read his wristband—Tandy, Charle. A nurse sprinted across the room and drew the curtain. She noticed his eyes following her.

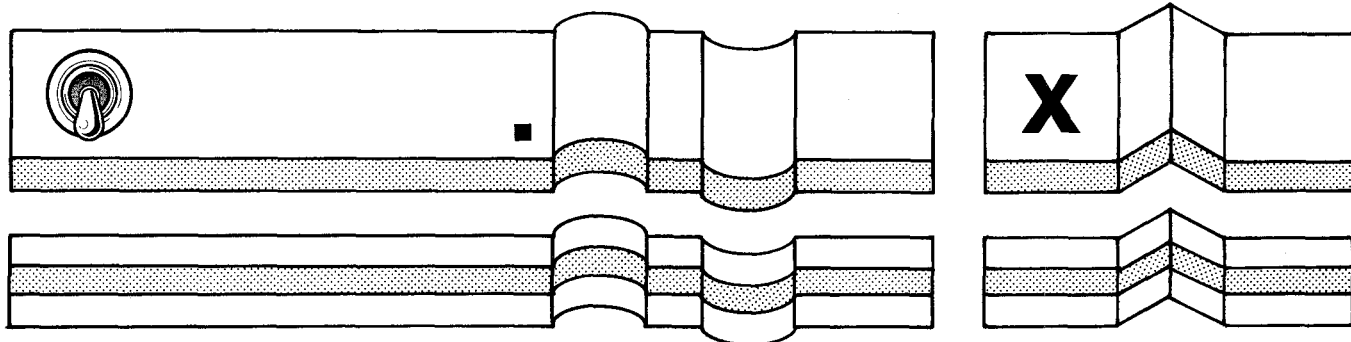
“I’m sorry. You’re getting company. Why don’t I give you something to help you sleep?” Her eyes were excited.

“I’m O.K.”

“Well, let me know,” she said.

The blue curtain totally surrounded Chub’s bed, cutting the room in half. But it didn’t keep out what was going on. Chub could hear the sheets crackle on the other bed as they were drawn back. Bottles clinked, someone

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excused themselves, a stretcher was wheeled in. A hand pulled the curtain back a little. A policeman looked at Chub, nodded, dropped the curtain. "Can't we move him?" Gruff, agitated voices rose above those of the nurses. Chub felt the tension growing. Someone was lifted on to the bed. There was a loud thick-tongued outburst that rang in the room.

"I'm gonna kill the fucker."

"Keep him on the bed or he'll tear out all of the stitches."

Someone backed into the curtain; a bottle disintegrated on the floor.

"Cut that shit out. We want to talk to you."

"Gimme somethin', I'm getting sick."

A nurse stepped into Chub's side. She had specks of blood on her uniform. She poured a cup of water and held a pill out to Chub. She said, "You'll need this to sleep."

"I'll take it later," Chub said.

She leaned closer. "He's drunk and we can't give him a sedative." Chub nodded.

"Wreck?" asked Chub.

"Stabbing," she whispered, shrugging her shoulders and backing away.

Chub closed his eyes. He tried not to listen fearing that at any minute the curtain would be thrown back and an accusing finger would be pointed at him. He turned his light out.

Where's Cathy? You got her out there?"

"You can see her later," a hard voice replied. "Why don't you help us get some facts straight?"

"What facts?"

"You've got eight cuts and a hundred stitches. That's a fact. How'd you get them? You didn't fall down."

"Maybe," said a meek voice.

"That's shit. Get off your horse, boy. Lieutenant Ashe is treating you right. You don't want to mess that up."

A lighter clinked and flickered on the ceiling. A chair scraped on the floor.

"Where's Woodley? I'll kill the little fucker."

"Keep it down." Smoke drifted over the curtain.

"Who's this Woodley?"

"Larry Woodley. Cathy told you guys, didn't she?"

"We've talked to her."

"What'd she tell you?"

"We'd like to hear your side of the story. I'm sure you'll tell us the same thing."

Chub took the sleeping pill. The cigarette smoke tickled his lungs. The police were moving around, perhaps preparing some kind of torture. None of the voices had been friendly.

"O.K., O.K. But then you got to make them give me somethin'." The voice paused. Then, "We popped a few, Cathy and me."

"Drugs?"

"No man, brew. We had a few, fooled around and then this Larry calls up. He's hot about somethin' so Cathy hangs up on him. Nice lady, Cathy. We're almost engaged. Nice lady. So, she says he's got the hots for her but he's a runt. You writin' this down?"

"Just a few notes. Go on."

"Well, we're about ready to hit the sack when this car pulls up in front and honks. Won't stop, so I go out on the porch and it drives away. Soon as I'm back inside, it stops again. Same thing 'cept I don't go out. Cathy wants to go out and talk to him but I don't let her. Then the door flies open and this shithead walks in."

"Did he have a weapon?"

"Ya, sure, big butcher knife. He starts bawlin' and sayin' how he loves Cathy, how she gives him the come-on. Cathy locks herself in the bathroom and he calls her a whore. Then the little creep starts swinging the knife. Stabs the bathroom door a few times, then comes after me. He got me good but I decked him. Then the neighbors show up and he splits. Man, I was just protectin' my lady."

"Protecting?"

"Ya. Say, can I bum a smoke off one of you guys?"

"You didn't have a weapon?"

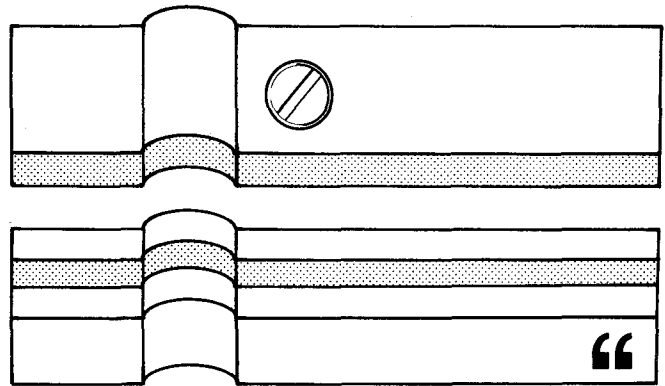
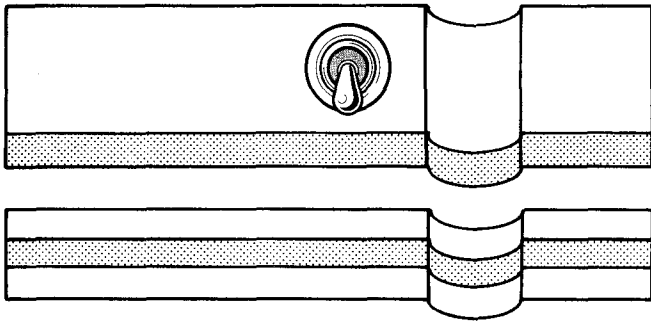
"No. Somebody tell you that? Full of shit. I was just protectin' my lady, my property. God man, can't you see I'm the one who's bleedin'?"

"Where's this Larry Woodley now?"

"How should I know? Probably suckin' up to his mother." Chub was disturbed by the laughter.

Thursday. "Let's see how you're doing, Mr. Tandy," said the morning nurse. Chub opened his eyes. The curtain remained drawn, blocking his view of the window. The room still smelled of smoke, destroying Chub's notion that what he had witnessed had been a fantasy, the result of the over-heated room, the sleeping pill or too much TV.

He heard, "All right, Bobby, you'll have to let us change the sheet."



The nurse helped Chub out of his bed and to the bathroom where he sagged on the sink and shaved. He needed the exercise, the nurse said. When he returned, the room was one again. He was face to face with Bobby. Chub turned on the TV and ignored Bobby who was asleep with his mouth open. The bandages were blood-soaked. Bobby jumped in his sleep, pulling down the sheet, exposing his skinny, hairy legs. Bobby's hands pawed the air. Chub was shoed from his bed and ordered to walk up and down the hall. He talked to a man who had a frozen hip and three grandchildren. Chub told him about Bobby. The man wasn't surprised. He'd read that a crime is committed every two seconds. Chub was frightened by the statistic but couldn't come up with a solution. He worried about Linda home alone. He wouldn't know what to say if something happened.

When Chub returned, Bobby had a visitor sitting on his bed. She was smoking and flicking the ashes on the floor. They were holding hands and Chub guessed she was Cathy. She gave Chub an offensive, perturbed glance. She was wearing a fringed leather jacket and blue jeans patched in the seat. Chub got in bed and pulled the sheet up. Cathy pulled the curtain.

They talked while Chub lay motionless, with his eyes closed. He could hear the liquid sounds of kissing.

"Where's Larry?" asked Bobby.

"I don't know," she replied in a lame whine.

"What was he doin' at your place anyways?"

Chub tipped his head up from the pillow.

"I love *you*," she cooed.

"Aw, don't give me any shit. I'm in up to here. You droppin' your pants for him were ya?"

"Oh, Bobby."

"I shoulda killed him when I had the chance. He's a little runt, isn't he, Cathy?"

Bobby lit a cigarette and coughed and sniffed.

"Why'd you use the knife?" asked Cathy.

"You didn't tell the cops I had a knife did ya?"

"I told 'em I didn't know who had it." There was a long pause, more kissing, moaning.

"Who's that?" asked Cathy, meaning Chub.

"Some guy who sleeps all the time."

Chub wanted to turn on the TV as a sign of life, a barrier, an answer to their kissing and clutching. He was hearing too much. Bobby and Cathy were too careless. For safety he remained stone still as the action across the room soaked through the curtain.

Bare feet patted the floor. The door slowly shut and latched.

"Just throw them on the chair," Bobby said.

Bobby's bed sighed with the weight of two bodies. Chub rose up on his elbows, straining to hear, to be certain.

"Am I in?"

"You're in," said Cathy.

Bobby sucked in his breath; Cathy chanted earnestly. Flesh slapped together and peeled apart. A steady rhythm rose from the hard mattress. Chub broke out in a cold sweat, drunk with wonder, under siege.

Bobby screamed.

"Oh, Bobby. I'm sorry, sorry. Are you bleeding? Did something...?"

Silence. Bodies at rest. Then zips. Snaps. Whispers. Chub took a deep breath and activated the TV set. Moments later the curtain rippled, smoke floated to the ceiling and the door opened on the quiet hallway. Kisses, smacks. Cathy passed through the door, turning her head, fastening her defiant eyes on Chub for an instant, melting his privacy. He smiled too late.

Bobby coughed and pounded his pillow.

Chub put on his paper slippers and shuffled down to the sitting room to meet Linda. He couldn't chance a meeting between Linda and Bobby. He guessed she would tell Bobby some story about Jody and Tom, and Bobby would offer to show her his stitches.

Linda arrived with a card from Sandy, chocolate chip cookies and razor blades.

"I don't think I can have cookies," Chub said.

"Well, someone will eat them. They always do." She studied Chub's face. "Are you feeling better? You look so tired."

"I'll be discharged tomorrow." Chub rubbed his eyes. "It's hard to sleep in a hospital. I miss being home. The kids."

"That's a good sign," she smiled and took his hands in hers, their knees touching. "But your eyes are really red."

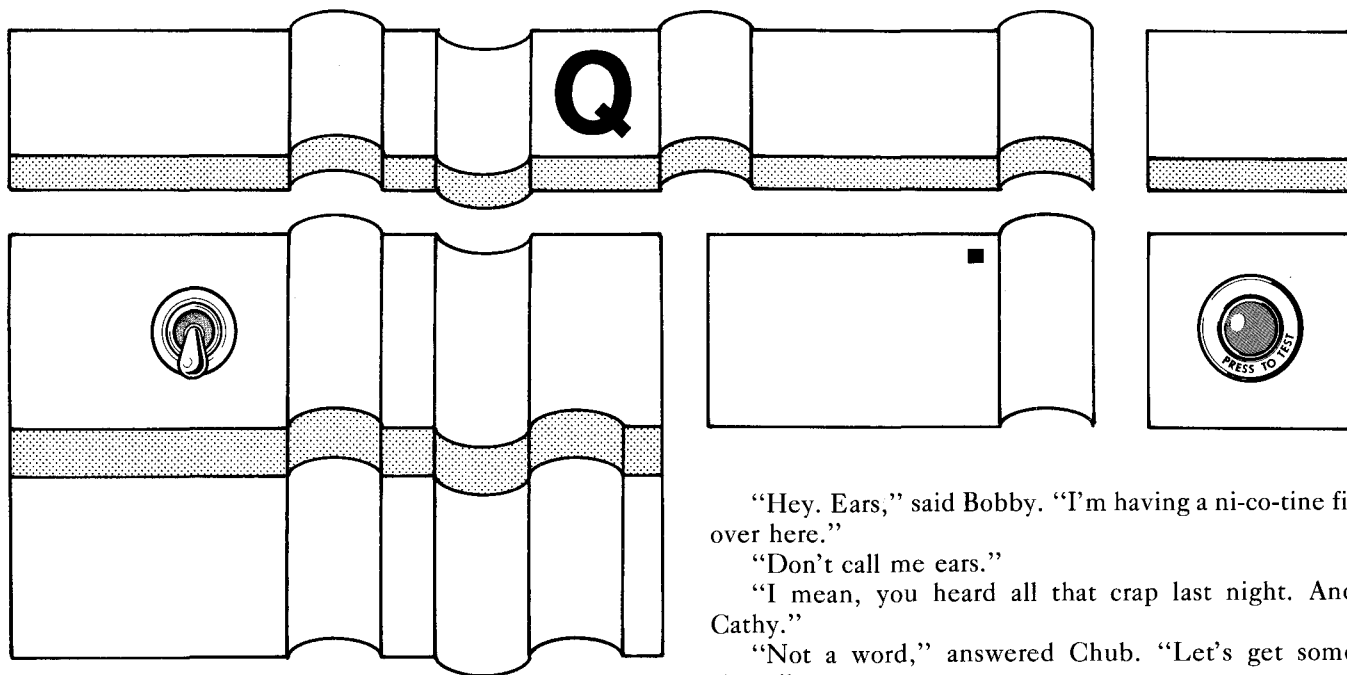
"I have a roommate. He got stabbed, then his girl friend came to see him."

"Tell them you need to rest," Linda said. "Is he bad?"

"Not too," said Chub. He yawned, his jaw popped.

"How's your incision?"

"It tickles."



Two men in overcoats, heads down, and a uniformed policeman hurried by. "They're going to talk to my roommate, Bobby."

"Oh," said Linda. "Maybe you can get some sleep then."

"Did you read about a stabbing in the paper?" Chub asked.

"I haven't had time to look at a paper, honey," she said and stood up. "Make sure you find out what you can eat. I have to plan ahead. I can't wait until you're back to normal."

Chub walked Linda down to the lobby and returned to his room. The police were just leaving. They nodded to Chub who was left with the truth stuck in his throat.

At 11:00 a nurse came in and straightened up. She warned Bobby not to fall asleep with a cigarette burning. He gave his promise politely. She shut out the overhead light and asked Chub which way he wanted the curtain. He motioned with his hand to leave it closed. She winked and disappeared. The room was quiet except for minor rustlings on Bobby's side. Bobby kept smoking, hummed bits from a song Chub didn't recognize and restlessly switched his light on and off. Chub could not erase the teasing image of Cathy astride the gauze-swathed Bobby. He fought hard not to understand until he could make his escape. Mind over matter, he thought. Be quiet.

"Hey," said Bobby. Chub didn't answer. "Hey over there. Got any smokes I could bum?"

"No."

"Shit. They won't let me out of this room. How 'bout you goin' down for me. Kools."

"Why don't you wait until morning. I've had an operation."

Bobby shifted in his bed. He flicked his lighter repeatedly.

"Hey. Ears," said Bobby. "I'm having a ni-co-tine fit over here."

"Don't call me ears."

"I mean, you heard all that crap last night. And Cathy."

"Not a word," answered Chub. "Let's get some sleep."

"You wouldn't say if you did. Would ya? Would ya?" Bobby laughed. "How 'bout openin' the curtain so we can get to know each other. I wanna see your face."

"Cut the talk," said Chub, his voice rising to a question, trembling.

"Old ears," Bobby sighed. "You know that guy Woodley. I'm goin' to kick his ass when I get out of here. Kick his ass, man. I'm all cut up." Bobby belched. "Cathy, I'd die for her sometimes."

"Good," agreed Chub, blushing, afraid Bobby would take it wrong.

"Sometimes, I said. But she's crazy. Speed. Grass. All the time takin' what she can get. Maybe I'll send her over to you tomorrow."

"I'm being discharged."

"Too bad. She'll do a job on ya. Course I'd have ta watch. Never can tell 'bout you older guys. Right, ears?"

Bobby kicked back the sheets and put on his boots. Chub could hear the boots scratch on the floor. The curtain stirred and was jerked aside. Bobby grinned at Chub and made a silly peace sign but didn't cross into Chub's territory. He was naked except for his boots.

"Charles Tandy," said Chub.

"So, Charles Tandy. What *do* you know, Charles?"

"Nothing," said Chub, regretting giving his right name. It was too late. Bobby could look up the name in the phone book.

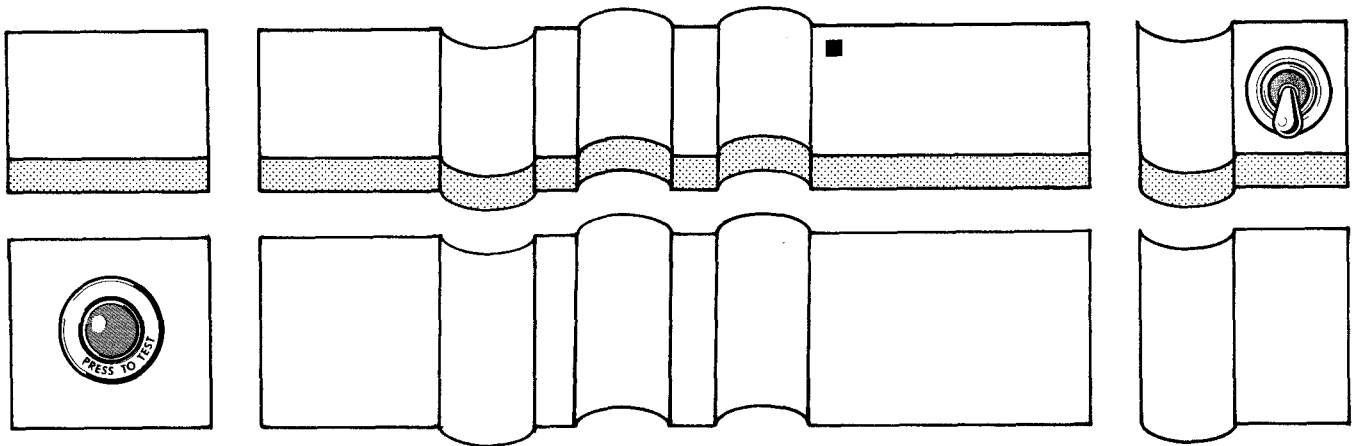
"I'm the Duke," said Bobby showing his dirty teeth. He pointed to an indistinct tattoo on his arm. "Bobby Duke."

Bobby sauntered over to his closet and dressed, gingerly putting on his shirt over his wounds.

"Maybe I have some cigarettes," offered Chub.

"No, no. It's check out time. This place is real bad for me. Makes me cough. 'Sides, I got business." He winked at Chub.

Bobby went over to the window and looked out. The wind was blowing the snow across the black open space between the hospital and the shopping mall. He put on



his flimsy jacket, ragged and stiff with dried blood. "The bastard owes me a coat," he said. He walked toward Chub with his leather cowboy hat in his hand, leaning, favoring his left side. He crossed the line.

"O.K. now." He pointed a bony finger at Chub. "You don't know anything. You just say, if anybody asks, that ya had those ears tucked away all the time. You don't know me from nobody, hear? You're a nice stud, right?"

"Right," said Chub feebly. "What's to tell?"

"What's to tell," Bobby repeated. "I'll get that fucker, that's what. Wish me luck, Charles."

"Good luck." Chub choked on the words. The stupidity.

"I don't need no luck. I got balls like apples." Bobby gripped his crotch, cackled and was gone. He made no attempt to cover his escape. Chub could hear Bobby's boots pounding down the hall.

Chub closed his eyes and thought of Linda, the children, the plant, the incision, the snow, Bobby.

At 1:00 Chub heard the nurses making their rounds. He thought of ways to cover Bobby's escape without giving himself away. After all, the police were really to blame for whatever happened. Chub got out of bed, his legs were weak, cold and floppy, his back was wet. A nurse strutted through the door and stopped.

"Where is he?" she asked, raising her careful eyebrows.

"Who?" Chub blinked. He noticed that Bobby's bed was smeared with blood. The pillow was on the floor. "I didn't know he was hurt so bad."

The nurse peeked into the closet. "What do you think?"

"Somebody could get killed," said Chub quietly.

The nurse giggled as if Chub had made a joke and left the room in a hurry. Chub was stranded, his mind stumbled over knots of what to do, what to do next. He walked to the dark window. The cold air brushed his face. The world was turning on him. None of his plan would stick together.

He moved to the doorway of his room. Voices carried down the hall from the nurse's station. They were worried about Bobby. How far could he get, did he have a car, how was he dressed, did anyone know?

Chub put on his pants under the hospital gown and left the room. Down one floor, unnoticed, Chub entered the dim lobby. He stopped at a pay phone and picked up the directory that hung by a chain. He laid two dimes on the silver shelf, found a number, memorized it and closed the book. He repeated the number, deposited a dime, waited, cleared his throat, tested his voice and dialed.

The phone rang ten times, four more.

"Hello," a voice said.

"Is this Larry Woodley?" asked Chub.

"Who's this?"

"Are you Woodley?"

"Ya. Why?"

"You don't know me, but listen. Bobby Duke is looking for you. You know what I'm talking about." Woodley said something away from the phone. "Listen," said Chub, "I know the truth. Be careful. Maybe you should call the police." Chub listened to the words, his words, reverberate. He could see the words; he could see Woodley.

"Who is this?" asked Woodley again.

Chub held the receiver away from his ear. Woodley's voice rattled in his hand. He cut the connection with his finger.

He quickly deposited another dime and dialed his own number. He spoke when Linda lifted the receiver.

"Linda, this is your husband. Were you awake?"

"Yes. I think Jody has bronchitis so I started the vaporizer. Shouldn't you be sleeping?"

"I can't. I just wanted to make sure you were all right," Chub said.

"I paid the neighbor boy four dollars to do the walk and driveway. He worked for an hour," Linda said.

"Are the doors locked?"

"The doors?"

"Yes, the doors," Chub said impatiently.

"Of course. Is anything wrong? You sound funny."

"Just tired. Can't I be worried? I'm sorry I called so late. Get some sleep, O.K.?"

"O.K. Everything's O.K., honey."

"Sleep tight," Chub said.

"You too."

Chub walked slowly back to his room, took off his pants and collapsed on the bed. He struggled with sheets, pulled them up over his head. He plugged his ears with his fingers and wished for something stronger. □



Florence Lewis

Mostly Melville

BOOKS & AUTHORS

"Little but reptile life is here found . . . No voice, no low, no howl is heard; the chief sound of life here is a hiss."

Walking on Hood Island to inspect the yellow albatross, one is aware that the chief sound of life in the Galapagos is the tourist. Hood is a favorite watering place, and when the garúa lifts off an afternoon, the sky is a peerless blue. One sits on the beach next to a sea lion, and looking stately out of a mangrove bush is a silent land iguana. One drinks in this picture post-card, somehow resentful that it has become a picture post-card. For looking over the headlands from the wide angle lens of one's own inner vision, one is numbly aware of seeing what one is supposed to see, as set forth and catalogued by the *National Geographic* or the *Sierra Club Bulletin*. Melville is a kind of antidote to this programmed appreciation. But one soon discovers that Melville's observation and Darwin's, too, grace the photography of the more sensitive publications; those who feel that photographs are somehow manqué, that the optic nerve needs to be connected to the imagination. The curse of modern tourism is the camera. So is the car. But on Hood, as on most of the islands of the Galapagos, there are no cars, and if one is going to see the islands, one has to brave stepping into and climbing out of a dinghy, and then walking up the side of a volcano or cross-country stepping along jagged lava beds or strolling heavily along beaches, oiled and vinegared against the sun, which begins taking its active toll as soon as the garúa lifts. Only the hardier sight-seer can trudge along in this fashion. Occasionally one sees an elegant dame led by the hand of a guide, lest she stumble over a rock and fall into bird droppings, but there are no sedan chairs for my lady. If she desires to leave her luxury cruiser in order to visit a colony of albatross and blue-footed boobies, she must leave the carriage behind. Not the camera. The camera is encouraged. To suggest otherwise is heresy. It is like asking a physician to examine a patient by abandoning the laboratory and becoming intimate, instead, with how the patient looks and feels. Meticulous case histories based on observation and intuition must be replaced by the x-ray reports and blood samples.

On the Galapagos the visitor is often only a collector of sights, as if he cannot remember what he has seen unless he has the print or the slide before him. But it also appears he can no longer describe what he has seen except by caption. Longer observations fail him. Even letters are a thing of the past. The postcard says it all.

Perhaps it is a question of degree, how much the poking and the visiting leads into one's own back alleys, how much snapping the shutters or zooming in on a wide-angle lens is a way of *not* seeing the world. "Some people are on the world, not in it" says John Muir on countless posters. The tourist sees outside, not inside. The car lets him tour.

The camera lets him peek. Suppose he had neither. What would become of him? Melville was a great poker.

Concerning the Giant of Them All

The tortoise would make progress if only he came out of his shell.

— From a Kitchen Sampler

There are in the Galapagos about eight different species of tortoise, and among the variety some do stick their necks out more than others in order to eat the pods of the *Opuntia* Cactus. Their shells are saddle-backed rather than dome-shaped. The pot holder that bears this noble embroidery reminds us that progress is a matter of sticking one's neck out, but the tortoise's caution is proverbial. His progress has been adaptation and survival, whether he slurps up green mud and grazes close to the ground, or whether he stretches his neck "his long, languid neck" to reach for the *Opuntia* pod. It is not the tortoise who must leave his shell and make connections, but man. And that is one of the reasons he travels. The tortoise never goes anywhere. So man must come to the tortoise to learn about himself. This is progress.

This is how Melville saw the giant tortoise.

" . . . something strangely self-condemned . . . despite a worshipful venerableness of aspect," inhabiting "dusky shells, . . . vast shells, heavy as chests of plate . . . medal-lioned and orbed like shields and dented and blistered like shields that have breasted a battle, shaggy too, here and there, with dark green moss and slimy with the spray of the sea." "Black as widower's weeds."

The memory haunted him.

"For often in scenes of social merriment and especially at revels held by candle-light in old fashioned mansions, so that shadows are thrown into the further recesses of angular and spacious rooms, making them put on a look of haunted undergrowth of lonely woods, I have drawn the attention of my comrades by my fixed gaze and sudden change of air . . ."

Emerging from those imagined solitudes was the ghost of a gigantic tortoise. But even in life, the tortoise is "ghost" like. " . . . All wicked-sea officers," Melville reported, . . . "more especially commodores and captains, are at death (and in some cases, before, death) transformed into tortoises; thenceforth to dwell upon those aridities, sole solitary lords of Asphaltum." Melville's own personal mythology was that the tortoises were enchanted, "victims of a penal, malignant or downright diabolical enchanter, for witness their infatuation of

hopeless toil." One accepts Melville's metaphor as an aspect of the truth, and wonders if the god of Genesis, perhaps, imprisoned the slippery, supple serpent, he who persuaded Eve to stick her neck out and take a chance on the apple. And did that God chain forever to a water-carrying Sherman Tank the sinuous serpent, to drag himself through eternity, a Sisyphus of sorts, but never to call at the end of a summit, the end of a day, "There, I've done it again?" How dreary to be a tortoise. Is the gift of his long life this lumbering gigantism? If so, it is a disease. What an imagination our Maker had. What has he in store for us, his new serpents, those who have eaten all the apples and the mushrooms, too?

We make our own enchantments. Will we live encased in automobiles, one day—eat in them, drink in them, be entertained in them, make love in them? Traffic will have become heavier. We will require smaller dungeons. Our water supply we will store in plastic cells placed along the inside of our domes. Food and medicine we may perhaps store under the seat, oxygen too. After awhile there will be room in our padded dungeon for only one, and love making will be performed by one automobile slowly, lugubriously mounting another, and midst enormous squeals ejaculating the semen through an exhaust pipe. The clanks and the squeals will be awesome but not to us, the man-mobile, who will be mostly immobile. Only a new kind of tourist will be amazed . . . whoever he may be . . . perhaps a bird from the Galapagos.

The tortoises of the Galapagos do copulate ferociously and make an awful din when they mount and ejaculate, but who would not make a racket if he had to mount his lady while he was wearing a tank? Even the knight climbed out of his armor. The knight was only partially imprisoned by his own stupidity. Man-mobile will not desire freedom anymore than the tortoise. Should a friendly tourist approach him, man-mobile will deflate his tires with an emphatic hiss, withdraw his serpent head, headbeams and all, into the deep recesses of his lined dungeon. He will pull it out again only to trumpet at a mate or another driver who is blocking his path. "For these creatures never move aside for any impediment . . . They butt like battering rams against immovable forces . . ." Give man a little more time to adapt to the demands of overpopulation and the proliferation of his chief toy and idol, the automobile. He will become the thing he loves. He will imitate the tortoise. Man has always imitated art.

Food from the Galapagos

When Melville was a sailor, "partly by way of freak," he says, a boat's crew went ashore "to see what they could see and bring back whatever tortoises they could carry." The adventurers returned with "three antediluvian creatures," and it took rope and "much straining" to land the tortoises on deck. Once they were stranded, Melville inspected them with a lantern. "Such worshipful venerableness of aspect! Such furry greenness mantling the rude peelings and healing the fissures of their shattered shells. I no more saw three tortoises. They expanded—became transfigured. I seemed to see three Roman Coliseums in magnificent decay."

In his hammock at night, he heard "the slow, weary draggings of these three ponderous strangers along the encumbered deck." In a nightmare he pictured them "writhing through the shades, grim as blacksmiths, crawl-

ing so slowly and ponderously . . . that sooty moss sprouts upon their back." His compassion for their condition notwithstanding, Melville, the following evening, sat down with his shipmates and dined on tortoise steak and stew, "a merry repast." After dinner he carved "three fanciful soup tureens from the shells."

To dine on tortoise today is a sin greater than cannibalism, for the tortoise is an endangered species. Nineteenth century whaling fleets sailed in the Galapagos and hauled as many tortoises as they could drag into the holds of their ships to store the creatures on their backs for as long as a year, a steady supply of fresh meat and turtle oil. Thirsty mariners would even slake their thirst as soon as they landed by taking an ax to the turtle, smashing his carapace and puncturing the water sacks which the tortoise stores beneath his roof. (It must have been grim stuff to drink, perhaps like cold, canned turtle soup.) Today man is a minor poacher, but native fishermen do drag off tortoises, for they believe that whatever belongs to Ecuador belongs to them. And what's a National Park? The big problem, however, are the feral pigs and dogs and black rats. They feed on tortoise eggs. Goats and donkeys do not crave such gourmet delight. They compete with the tortoise for the available vegetation, and the tortoise always comes in last. So these poor giants are kept in special reserves on the Galapagos, and one hikes half a day on Santa Cruz to visit them, or a whole day on Isabella. Albermarle, Melville called this island. Now all the islands have Spanish names, too.

On all of the islands, Spanish and English, there is free hunting of pigs and goats. Anyone who spots a pest can pop him off and eat him for stew. We ate pig one night and thought it was goat. On the island of Floreana we ate home-grown beef and swore it was pig. There is no accounting for tastes. We ate both with zest. But we would shoot the man who shot a tortoise and refuse steadfastly to taste the tortoise meat, even after the deed were done. Lobster is something else. Lobsters are not part of the National Park. The waters where one dives for lobsters do not belong to Ecuador, so one may dine, lunch or breakfast off lobster, thirty at a time. Lobsters are not endangered. But one may not nibble on a Sally Lightfoot, the bright red crab who dances sideways on the black lava. She belongs to the park. Conscience makes for cowardly taste. One envies Melville's innocence. Our tastes are Catholic, too.

The Iguana

The meat of the marine iguana is very fine, but only a hawk may eat it. The iguana moves quickly, but, in hiding, he permits his tail to show, and even though the iguana can regenerate a tail, the hawk will not rest content. So little fare. He pounces on the lizard and tears through the leathery skin and shreds the rich iguana meat, and gluts himself. Cousteau reports that the iguana is actually soft to the touch, so the hawk does not have to tear so hard after all. But I doubt that Melville would eat an iguana. I think he would sooner eat a man. He called the iguana "that strangest anomaly of outlandish nature" in a land that "refuses to harbor even the outcasts of the beasts." He did not dwell longer on the iguana. In order to know the iguana one has to be the iguana or at least be able to eat him. For the iguana comes from another planet. A sea lion will look at you. A blue-footed boobie will lose his

boobie-hop if, inadvertently, you wander off the trail. A tortoise knows you are near, but the iguana? He appears to be looking at the sun. If you disturb him, he spits, but you have to step on him first. He is motionless, expressionless. More than any other creature on the Galapagos one can say of the iguana—"The special curse of the Encantadas, that which exalts them in desolation above Idumea and the pole, is that to them change never comes, neither the change of seasons nor of sorrows." One can almost say this, for one day on Hood we saw an iguana to whom age had certainly come. Instead of black or gray, the usual color of the marine iguana, this creature had turned rust, dull rust. Instead of lying among the heaps of iguana who resemble piled up rubber truncheons or moving doggedly to the sea, this old lady was creeping away from the tribe and away from the sea.

"Where is she going?" I asked the guide.

I assumed the iguana was a she. There was in our company an elderly lady who never once complained of sea-sickness, food, weather, fatigue. If sorrow ever came to her, she let it rest with her. She did not visit it on others. I saw in her the ancient iguana.

"She's going to die," said the guide of the iguana.

"She's pretty brave about it."

"Instinct isn't brave," he said.

But perhaps it is brave for man to recollect instinct or reexamine it in little creatures, those with less imagination and intelligence than he, in order to learn humility. Several people in our party saw the rusty iguana creeping steadfast toward a cliff. No one stopped to photograph her. The elderly lady turned pointedly away. How does one photograph that which has no caption? Except cliché . . . the human condition.

The Terrain

"Like split Syrian gourds left withering in the sun, they are cracked by an everlasting drought beneath a tropic sky."

"Have mercy on me," the wailing spirit of the Encantadas seems to cry, "and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame."

"Tangled thickets of wiry bushes without fruit and without a name, springing up among deep fissures of calcined rock, and treacherously masking them; on a parched growth of distorted cactus trees."

"In many places, the coast is rock-bound or, more properly, clinker-bound, tumbled masses of blackish or greenish stuff like the dross of an iron-furnace, forming dark cliffs and caves here and there, into which a ceaseless sea pours a cascade of foam . . ."

"However calm the sea without, there is no rest for these swells and those rocks."

"In no world but the fallen could such lands exist."

The Galapagos is actually a happy place. Bobbing in the profound blue is a converted fishing boat; several, perhaps. A dinghy lies tied to the rocks. A guide is in consultation with a visitor, and the visitors are clicking and snapping away at flora and fauna. But should you chance to wander away, still on the trails—for these you must

never leave—should you chance, for a moment, to find yourself alone on the curling lava, then those "split Syrian gourds left withering in the sun" will torment you with their hollowness. For how can one photograph one's inner sense of desolation, one's fear of the alone? Space, endless space, like water everywhere and not a drop to drink.

We forget that the Galapagos is a laboratory, the rarest of its kind, and visitors come here to study. But surely not themselves. Self-comparisons and the making of metaphor is self-indulgence and, what is more, it prevents empirical data. On study tours, such as the one we took, field notes are very important: time and place, weather and tide, exact behavior, size of wing, breadth of beak. But not our own. And yet how best to remember or examine the flora except by self-comparisons?

"The capriciousness of the tides of air sympathizes with those of the sea. Nowhere is the wind so light and baffling, and every way unreliable and so given to perplexing calms as at the Encantadas."

What a way to explain why a ship should tarry a month to get from one island to another, the distance only ninety miles between. Ariel ascendant?

"And yet at other times there is a mysterious indraft, which irresistibly draws a passing vessel among the isles, though not bound to them."

Caliban *en passant*.

"This apparent fleetingness and unreality of locality of the isles was most probably one reason for the Spaniards calling them the Encantadas . . ."

To detach the self from the observation makes a lab report the dullest reading in the world. It also gives men plastic insides: Never to extend the self is to snap the shutter on the self, to stay in the shell and hiss.

On Generalizations, in General

One must in fairness declare against the generalization; only they are such fun. Based often on partial or lopsided observation, they roll along ponderously but with great dignity, something like a tortoise. One wonders, if Melville had a modern camera, would he use it? I'll lay you odds he wouldn't. Odds based on what? Oh, I dunno. He hated the trains because they didn't permit people to see anything. But if Melville had a modern camera, how could he resist using it? He'd resist. One photo, but forty or fifty or a hundred and fifty? He'd resist. He was a rebel about experiencing things first hand. And a romantic. He did his own reporting. Besides, sheer number alone overwhelms the imagination. Photography simply inhibits metaphor. It uses only one part of the cerebral hemisphere. Ask any synergist.

All the zoology people and the bird people and the geology nuts on our trip read Melville's sketches with awe. "What an eye he had" was the typical exclamation. Someone questioned whether Melville had placed the Hermit Oberlus on the right island, but concerning metaphor there was never a peep. Always they praised the keenness of his sight, his inner camera. Mrs. Hawthorne was also impressed by his vision, by his ability to penetrate people. Our group saw him penetrate the heart of the Galapagos, its magic, its eccentric fertility, its desolation.

"But not uninfluenced by their character, as they now confessedly exist, the modern voyager will be inclined to

fancy that the bestowal of this name might have in part originated in that air of spell-bound desertness which so significantly invests the isles. Nothing can better suggest the aspect of once living things malignly crumbled from ruddiness into ashes. Apples of Sodom, after touching, seem these isles."

The metaphor is contained in the landscape. What does it require to unlock the comparisons?

"And indeed sackcloth and ashes as they are, the isles are not perhaps unmitigated gloom. For while no spectator can deny their claims to a most solemn and superstitious consideration, no more than my firmest resolutions can decline to behold the spectre-tortoise when emerging from its shadowy recess; yet even the tortoise, dark and melancholy as it is upon its back, still possesses a bright side."

"Enjoy the bright, keep it turned up perpetually if you can, but be honest and don't deny the black. Neither should he, who cannot turn the tortoise from its natural position so as to hide the darker and expose his livelier aspect, like a great October pumpkin in the sun, for that cause declare the creature to be one total inky blot."

Metaphor requires focusing on the self. That's a fairly putrid generalization, isn't it? Everyone knows that Melville snapped the shutter on himself concerning his own family. An examination of his own children, a look at one of their photos could have told the father how wretched his children were. Great teacher, why did he have to preach to them, torment them so, that one of his daughters refused ever after to speak his name and one of his sons surely took his own life. We know there are lousy psychiatrists who screw up their own lives and the lives of their patients. But then there are also great physicians who help others even though they cannot manage to help themselves. Their awareness of their inability to control their own pain and the destinies of those they love is often the reason for the ingenuity and the depth of the therapy they extend to others.

The metaphor is in the landscape or the human condition, but one finds the words in the self, especially when one tries to get a handle on the pain or see into the eye of his own cyclone. "One must have a mind of winter and have been cold a long time," says The Snowman. But what if the traveler has never been cold or never tasted ashes and never felt himself to be condemned. Suppose he doesn't see a great October pumpkin in the sun as the other side of the tortoise. Doesn't a photograph equal a Turner?

"With a view of fishing we had lowered three boats and pulling some two miles from our vessel, found ourselves just before dawn of day close under the moonshadow of Rodondo. Its aspect was heightened, and yet softened by the strange double twilight of the hour. The great full moon burnt in the low west like a half-spent beacon, casting a soft mellow tinge upon the sea like that cast by a waning fire of embers upon midnight hearth . . ."

Why is it that no photo of Rodondo can move the sight as this passage can, just as no photo of two lovers in stark embrace can move the senses as much as Munch's "Kisses?" One sees or feels the parts moving up to the whole. One is taken breathlessly by the whole and feels the parts. The camera does not forge, shape, or tell. It sight-sees. It hits and runs. To see the Galapagos only through the eye of a camera is never to know the creation.

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Of Birds and People

"Pelicans. Their elongated bills and heavy leathern pouches suspended thereto, give them the most lugubrious expression. A pensive race, they stand for hours together without motion. Their dull, ashy plumage imparts an aspect as if they had been powdered over with cinders. A penitential bird, indeed, fitly haunting the shores of the clinkered Encantadas. Whereon tormented Job himself might well have sat down and scraped himself with potsherds."

Cousteau reports that when he visited the Galapagos to study the iguana his crew sometimes found pelicans dying of starvation. Local fishermen had slashed the sacks, "the heavy leathern pouches" in order to keep the birds from fishing, "Job himself might have sat down."

In the Galapagos today there are few natural predators among the animals. No "chain murders" says Cousteau. Frigate birds appear to be genuinely mean. They will snatch the fish from the beak of another bird and swoop down on nests and grab up the eggs. The Galapagos hawk feeds on the iguana, but the survival of the fittest me Tarzan, me toughest does not apply here. "It is as though nature were trying to prove that the idea of disarmament is not so utopian," says Cousteau.

Certainly the birds and the beasts have no fear of

disarmament. The sea lions get sore as hell if one approaches their babies, but they will turn right around and play with you in the water, should you go for a swim or a snorkel. But how many poachers and fishermen who slash pelican pouches before fear sets in and how many tourists throwing Frisbees or rubber balls or, more gently, sneaking up with cameras so that the courtship or the mating procedure loses its natural progression?

On Hood Island, the boats bob in the harbor, and tourists sun themselves in bikinis and crazy hats. And the boats that carry them from one island to the next merrily toss garbage into the butterfly green of the Galapagos waters. A brave tourist jumps off the side of the boat to bathe in these delicate waters, using only one capful of biodegradable shampoo to wash all over and very good riddance. Feces float happily around the bather. Why should the bather wax dainty? The droppings might be his own.

On Santa Cruz, home of the Darwin Research Station, there is a small hotel. The reports are there will be several small hotels. The Galapagos Hilton may not come to Santa Cruz, but another cunning monstrosity will surely be built, perhaps in the shape of a tortoise, many tortoises. The tourist can crawl into and out of his own tortoise shell, complete with hot water, bathe and then toddle around the island in his tortoise chamber, propelled by a battery or two. *¿Como no?*

Can a visitor survive a trip to the islands without servants and guides to keep him in comfort? The guides and fresh water are the only necessity. The guides are hired by the National Park to protect the park as well as the visitor. Our study tour slept sixteen on an old ketch, and it was not comfortable, especially when the garúa made the sea very brave and some of us very queasy. Darwin, we remembered, was sea-sick for five years. Melville could not endure the rigors of a sea voyage in his middle age. As for comfort, our guide gave us little. There were no gripes . . . we had come to the Galapagos with reverence. He would teach us more. But what could he do with the crew, a really nice bunch of guys, or the company for which they worked? Waste and garbage? They dumped everything into the sea. It simply didn't bother them. And what could our guide do with native visitors to the islands. Ecuadorians who insist that the islands belong to them, not to him, and who is he to tell them what they can or cannot do, damn his gringo impertinence.

"I know not where one can better study the Natural History of strange sea-fowl than at Rodondo. It is the aviary of the ocean. Birds light here which never touched mast or tree."

"The great full moon burnt in the low west like a half-spent beacon, casting a soft mellow tinge upon the sea like that cast by waning fire of embers upon a midnight hearth; while along the entire east the invisible sun sent pallid intimations of his coming."

To read the Sketches, Melville's Encantadas, is to recognize that for all the description of the "desertness," a place where Bartelby with his "cadaverously, gentlemanly nonchalance" could live in peace and "prefer not to" without causing another soul dismay, the islands are an oasis, and tourism its potential despoiler. Pigs and goats and rats and poaching fishermen one can poison or even shoot by accident. But the tourist has his inalienable right to visit and spend money in the name of joy and

fellowship. And Ecuadorians need every nickel they can get. Perhaps if the islands permitted no comfort except guides and no camera but a notebook . . .

Oh bullshit, lady! How sanctimonious can you get? Camera carriers are just as respectful of the islands as you are—preaching parsnip. Travel is play. It is the bright side of the tortoise, the great pumpkin turned toward the sun. The somber widower's weed, we do not deny. It lurks in us all. We feel its presence, but now we push it away. We snap, we clink. We study. We play. We do not snap the shutter on ourselves. We refresh ourselves for another day. And what are you going to do with Ecuadorians? Translate Melville into Spanish for them? Make Melville required reading, or Darwin or Jacques Cousteau? Prohibit taking of pictures in the name of conversation or ecology! You've got to be kidding. Melville would have used a camera. Darwin? Of course he would!

You have indicated, lady, that the camera is a curse. You have suggested that it prevents self-examination and connection. Art, madam, does the same. It offers escape to those who cannot bear to examine the chaos of their own lives. So they look for it in others. You hinted at this very condition in your lament for Melville's children. The question is, of course, how to keep the Galapagos clean. The oasis will be destroyed in a few years if we do not keep the question before us. Restrictions there must be on garbage and giant cruisers. We are not so rapacious, madam, that we would argue as some librarians do that it is better for books to be stolen than to be left stale and moldy on dusty library shelves. We know that the flora and the fauna of the Galapagos are endangered and cannot be replaced, but the more publicity they receive, the more articles are written and photos published. . .

From without no wonderful effect is wrought within ourselves, unless some interior response and wonder meets it.

The Sierra Club's *Flow of the Wilderness* begins with this brief sermon from Melville. The photography overwhelms. One gasps at the landscapes. One desires to experience, to know, to touch, to take, to see, to grab, to tell, to bring back slides, to crow, "I've been there!" And one is surely disappointed to miss the sights that others have gourmandized. . . "How come I didn't see that shot of Punta Espinosa?" "How come I didn't get to take that?"

A lot of people are being cheated, but they are the ones who would never come at all, who confess in private that if "you've seen one island, you've seen them all." They would honestly stay at home, only they have come to collect pictures.

Hey, listen, fellas. Galapagos is hot, dry, boring, clinker-bound, like an iron foundry. Read Melville. He tells it like it is. Enchantment is half fairy-land, half hell. It's not for people at all. □

FLORENCE G. ("Flossie") LEWIS still teaches in the Bay Area and has work upcoming in *Encounter* and *California Quarterly* . . . PAULA DEITZ is managing editor of the *Hudson Review* . . . VINE DELORIA is based in Colorado, but travels extensively in the interests of the Native American cause. His essay on page 11 was commissioned by Athabasca University in its Merrill Wolfe Memorial Lecture series in December 1977.



Lawrence Sturhahn

The Crap Shoot

Everything up front but trumpets . . .

The San Francisco International Film Festival—1977 was the 21st annual—boasts with that number to be the oldest in this country (9 years younger than Cannes). Its \$225,000 budget is underwritten by the city out of the Hotel Tax Fund, filled in by ticket sales, assorted gifts from producers who have used the city as a location (last year there were none; next year there should be several), and the sale from opening night: the premiere film, dinner, and dancing party. The reason people dress formally and go to that event (which costs \$75 a head) probably is not primarily to see the film, but to see each other—and be seen. The reason that people pay the \$4 (which is not cheap) for reserved seats at the baroque Palace of Fine Arts in its excellent theatre is to see the films. The reason the city of San Francisco underwrites the festival (\$49,000 last year) is because it's good for the tourist trade. Tourists *are* San Francisco's trade, and even if few tourists come to the festival it's valuable to the city maybe because it's on the city list of cultural attributes. Besides American Conservatory Theatre, the 49-mile Scenic Drive, the ballet, the red bridge spanning the Golden Gate, there's a film festival too.

This year the opening film was "Bobby Deerfield," with Al Pacino as a race-car driver with a disturbed family background, afraid of the potential of his own death, falling in love with Marthe Keller, whose hair is falling out because she's terminally ill—which for some inexplicable reason he doesn't con to for the longest damned time. At one point a sullen Pacino says, "I never had anything broken." To which she answers, figuratively combing her thinning hair, "extraordinary." Towards the end, the two of them sit in his car which has been put piggyback

on a train through the Alps—which naturally means a lot of tunnels. In the sudden light at the end of one, "Destiny," she says. What else is new?

And what is strange about this film is its pastiche of *European* art film style, the moody lighting and excellent composition, the exotic back-grounds (the stunning balloon sequence), all this good rich stuff on the back of a big soft sentimental soap opera. When it was released it didn't do any business either, even when they started advertising it as "Al Pacino is Bobby Deerfield!" For then it was too late. *Sic transit gloria mundi*. Which is probably just as well.

2

The first candy store . . .

With opening night out of the way the festival settles down to the serious business of showing films. It's two a night for thirteen nights, and other things on each weekend afternoon—along with personal appearances of stars, directors and producers (and film clips from their work). Last year too they showed a series of American Musicals (another of the classic *genres* of American cinema) in the mornings. At the box office and down the sidewalk along the building side, lined up, and waiting for the doors to open, are the film goers. Certainly most of them are specially interested—the art house audience attending a feast. And in the offerings of 1977 I saw some fascinating films.

From Sweden was "Paradise Place" which is just now, in April, being released. Produced by Ingmar Bergman, it's directed by a woman—an actress who has played in Bergman's repertory film company—Gunnel Lindblom. Its title ironic, the picture concerns the reunion of two women friends along with

part of their fragmented families at a summer house called Paradise Place. In the duration of this visit—its details very rich and its nuances very real—there is madness and death.

There were three from Italy. "An Average Little Man" is the middle class *everyman* confronted by the more-awful-because-it's-accidental assassination of a loved son in a violent shootout in which they are innocent bystanders (a terrible fact of modern Italian life). The shock and horror and rage create an avenger who takes the law and retribution into his own hands—savagely. Co-written and directed by Mario Monicelli, he also directed "Dear Michael," which was shown at the festival in 1976.

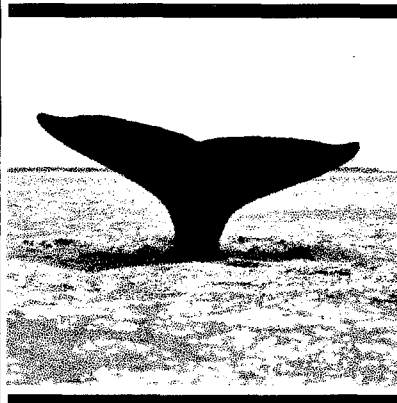
"A Special Day" is the two character confrontation, a *tour de force* acted out by the great Italian actors Sophia Loren and Marcello Mastroianni, both at the top of their form. The day is pre-war Italy, when fascism flowers and Hitler comes to visit Rome. The festivities empty this apartment building except for two who meet, join, and part, one to a real prison and the other to the prison of her home and family. Ettore Scola, the director (with two other recent credits), also co-wrote this screenplay.

And the most compelling, "My Father, My Master," written and directed by two brothers, Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, and originally produced on 16mm for Italian television. Coming on as a reminiscence of a writer in the present, it flashes back his childhood and the demon to whom he was bound—by both love and hate—his father.

From the U.S.S.R., "The Orphans," again a nostalgia film—again anti-romantic—the real aspect of the past. It's also the memory of childhood of a writer, who with his brothers and sister was orphaned

Continued on page 78

Imagine a world without WHALES



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**Imagine a world without
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Paula Deitz Grand Opera in Geneva

Anyone who enjoys opera finds in Geneva, Switzerland, evenings memorable both for the superior quality of the musical experience and for the general pleasure of the setting—and this includes the other musical and cultural amenities of the city, to say nothing of its scenic beauty. The opera has become a great attraction here particularly since the renovation of the Grand Théâtre de Genève in the early sixties. Also, tickets may be purchased on location with relative ease, and the Grand Théâtre, like Geneva's other major concert halls, is within the network of one of the finest and most attractive mass-transit systems in the world.

The 1977-78 season began in September with performances of the complete "Ring" cycle: all four operas of Wagner's *L'Anneau du Nibelung*—*L'Or du Rhin*, *La Walkyrie*, *Siegfried* and *Le Crépuscule des dieux* (the titles are in French, but the operas are sung in German)—were presented in two sequences over a two-week period. This ambitious and successful project was a culmination of each of the operas having been produced during a recent season. The remainder of the season included: *Tosca* (Puccini); *Così fan tutte* (Mozart); *La Belle Hélène* (Offenbach); *La Femme sans Ombre* (R. Strauss); *Médée* (Cherubini); *Iphigénie en Tauride* (Gluck); *Nabucco* (Verdi) and *Wozzeck* (Berg). Rather than being presented in a rotating schedule, all the performances of one opera per season are given in a single two-week period. The advantages of this system, particularly the economic ones, are obvious: stage sets remain in place for the duration; guest singers stay in residence with ample time between performances, and an informative exhibit relating to the current opera may be mounted in the theatre's lobbies. In between opera weeks, the theatre features the Ballet du Grand Théâtre, a company very directly under the influence of Balanchine, as well as solo concert artists.

A performance of *Le Crépuscule des dieux* demonstrated the quality to be expected this year under the general direction of Jean-Claude Riber. First, there is always that same excellent ensemble, the Orchestre de la Suisse

Romande, Geneva's resident musicians (in Switzerland all cultural institutions are supported by the individual cantons and not the federal government). Unlike New York City, where the opera, ballet and symphony orchestras are all separate entities, the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande does the whole job in Geneva, and it is a job done to perfection. Every performance offers music with a clarity of sound for which the orchestra is well known. As an aside, it is interesting to speculate why this custom, so sensibly followed in Geneva, of one orchestra serving several functions, cannot be adopted in other metropolitan cultural centers. Among the benefits to be cited is that the musicians are fully employed and not faced with the seasonal layoffs which in New York become contract issues for the opera and ballet orchestras.

At the performance I attended, Berislav Klobucar conducted, and his control was complete—so complete that the audience was not even aware of an extraordinary and tragic event, the collapse and death from a heart attack, five minutes before the end of the performance, of a gifted member of the orchestra's string section. The orchestral interludes as conducted by Klobucar were of a beauty and expressiveness not often heard at opera performances. This season, the orchestra will be under the musical direction of a different conductor for each opera.

The singers as a group were distinguished above all by a very good balance of voices, so that you are not necessarily attracted to one at the expense of the others as may occur under the star system. Katalin Kasza as Brünnhilde and Hermin Esser as Siegfried gave moving and beautiful renditions of their respective roles.

In the program notes, Jean-Claude Riber, *metteur en scène* for *Le Crépuscule des dieux* and the other "Ring" operas—as he will be for *La Femme sans Ombre* and *Wozzeck*—sets forth his intelligent theory about how the music must carry the performance; and yet, what he does with form and color, though not intrusive, is visually quite memorable as well. Two effects in particular should be

mentioned. The first is the combination of massive grey stone, a sleek lucite bench and the lush red velvet robe of Guttrune in the palace of the Gibichungs, Act I, Scene I. So that this setting may be compared to others, the program features no fewer than eight photographs of the same scene as it was staged in Bayreuth from 1876 to 1976. Comparing them to the Geneva production, one concludes that Riber has done well indeed.

The second striking effect was achieved by the use of film at the very end of the opera. Projected onto a vertical rectangle of space high on the backdrop was first a close-up of a brilliant display of flames, the flames which are to consume Valhalla. This vision conveyed the immediate sense of heat and destruction that only real fire can produce. The flames were then transmuted into torrents of rushing green water whose force and freshness suggested that they were filmed from the side of a low bridge after the spring run-off. There is, in fact, in Geneva a bridge over the Rhône at a point where the water is partially dammed; and standing there watching the water rush through the liberated channels you get just such a feeling as Riber meant you to have of the Rhine.

The forty-eight page program is a handy anthology of literature on the operas, including historical materials such as extracts from Cosima Wagner's journals, an historical essay on the composition of the "Ring" by Geneva's chorus director, Paul-André Gaillard, and notes on the current production like the one by Jean-Claude Riber already mentioned. It also includes a curious time chart, divided by acts, showing the length of twenty-nine performances of the *Götterdämmerung* as conducted at Bayreuth from 1876 (Hans Richter) to 1976 (Pierre Boulez). The program is beautifully produced, as Swiss publications usually are, with only four pages of advertising at the end and the rest tucked in loose-leaf at the beginning.

What Geneva has is an opera produced with all the traditional considerations and well thought-out innovations in design which enhance the performances. They are not an insular company, but they do seem unaffected by what is referred to now as the Common Market style, observable in other European music capitals

where extravagant and often irrelevant embellishments are offered by directors who ply their talents on the international circuit. Far from making the performances more exciting, they tend to dilute the musical experience by offering too many distractions, and the sameness of this approach makes the opera companies themselves less distinctive.

In addition to the admirable performances one may expect in Geneva, going to the opera here offers other distinct environmental pleasures. First, hardly any one is late to the opera. Arriving five minutes before performance time, I was surprised to find the Place Neuve, on which the Grand Théâtre faces, completely empty of people and vehicles. The audience was already inside and composed for the performance. As this was a subscription night, most of the audience was in evening dress. (There is a note in the program recommending this attire for all opening nights.) At intermission, everyone moves toward the long gallery, which fronts the building above the ground-floor lobby and whose high windows look out on the Place Neuve. There refreshments of champagne and orange juice are served at long cloth-covered tables along with abundant trays of patisseries. Although the house was full, there was never a crush.

From the windows one can view the illuminated fashionable district of the elevated old city enclosed by vine-covered walls, the gates of the park entrance to the University of Geneva and, on the right, the Conservatory of Music. At this performance, in the rooms adjoining the gallery, an excellent exhibit could be perused at intermission. There were at least fifty maquettes of scenes from the "Ring" done by students at Bayreuth and other opera centers in Europe. The imagination and textures—glass, metal and drapery—of these architectural renditions did much to make me observe more closely the style in which the opera was being performed.

Part of the pleasure of being in the Grand Théâtre derives from the knowledge that for many years in the fifties and early sixties the theatre was closed. The interior had been destroyed by fire, and the story goes that the committee was slow in deciding in what style to reconstruct it. It

was worth waiting for, however. In contour, the arrangement of boxes and balconies is that of a small traditional opera house, but the lines are very sleek and elegantly modern. The wood used to face the balconies is of a rosewood color and the carpeting and velour seats are in a peach tone like rosé wine. This gives the interior a warm glow. The major adornment is a gold metallic lattice-work structure which forms part of the ceiling and through which light filters, providing the only glitter there is. The effect is one of importance, without regret or nostalgia for the past. The new decor also blends well with the elegant and classical exterior.

Leaving the opera (this performance ended after midnight), you are again in the quiet town plaza where it is easy to find transportation back to where you are staying. You can even walk almost anywhere in fifteen minutes and safely, too. It is all a pleasure from beginning to end, and if you have some time to spend in Geneva, you should hear the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande in their home hall only two blocks away. Geneva's main concert hall, Victoria Hall, is worth a visit if only to see the magnificent interior architecture of this building which the British Consul gave to the city shortly after Queen Victoria's death. Victoria herself would have been immensely pleased by those tiers upon tiers of boxes festooned with decorations along the sides of the two-level auditorium, as well as by the magnificent organ pipes. It is a feast for the eyes—so go early. There are also frequent recitals in Victoria Hall; a recent concert by Sviatoslav Richter, who played four Beethoven Sonatas superbly, showed the house to its greatest advantage, and testified to its fine acoustics. At the close, there was thunderous applause from the layers and layers of boxes reaching up to the ceiling.

Hearing music in Geneva is a thoroughly civilized experience at every level. For opera schedule and ticket information, write directly to: Le bureau de location du Grand Théâtre, 11, boulevard du Théâtre, 1211 Geneva 11, Switzerland. Telephone: (022) 21-23-18. There are also special student prices. Tickets for Victoria Hall concerts may be purchased from the ticket office at the Grand Passage, Geneva's Bloomingdale's.

—Paula Deitz

CONTEMPORARIES: Five Chicago Painters

On these two pages the NAR is pleased to feature the work of five Chicago painters, drawn from a recent exhibition mounted at the Ohio State, Florida State, and Northern Iowa universities. Though we are not an "art" magazine, conversant with the jargons of that world, we know

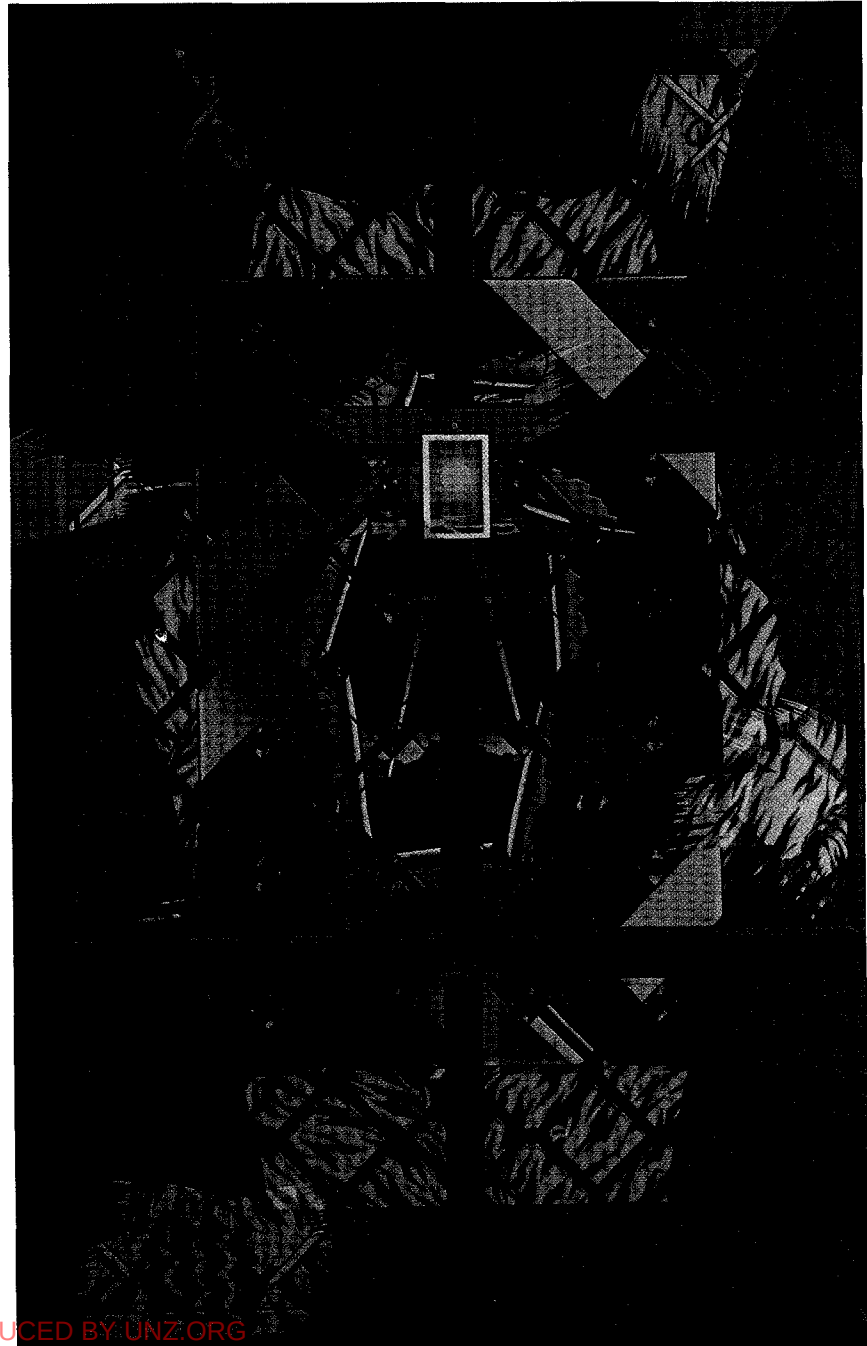
what we like, and while other commentators discourse knowledgeably about the elements of surrealism, primitivism, and imagism shared by a dozen Chicago artists, it contents us to point to these few examples of the work itself. We are indebted to Phyllis Kind for these pictures.

Captions taken from an essay by Sanford Sivitz Shaman

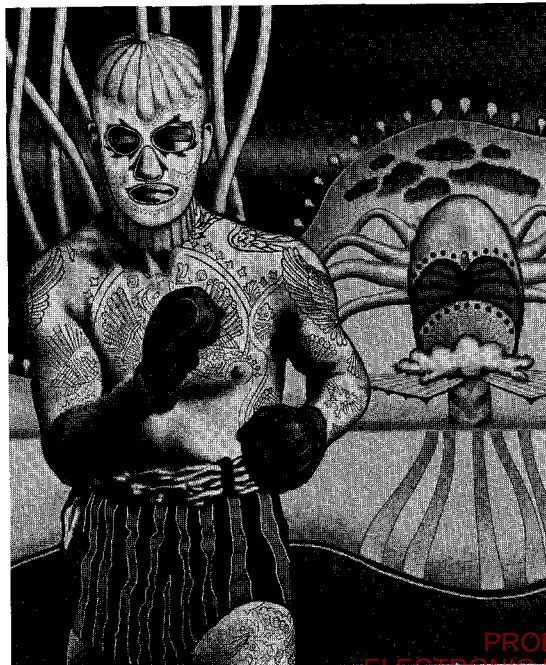
Analogies #6 (1973)
collage drawing, 30½" x 22½"
collection of George Veronda

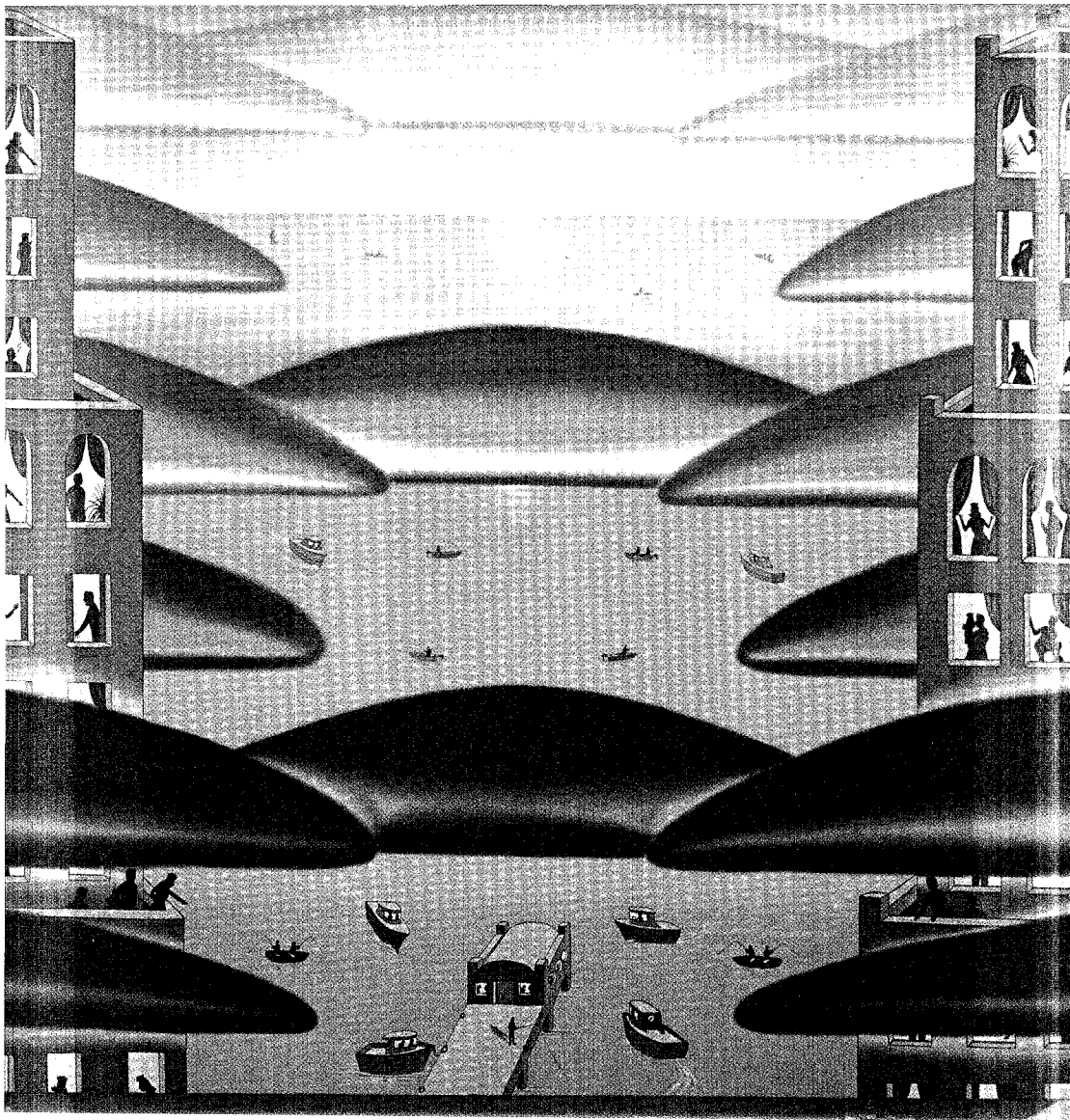


Blue Street (1970)
oil on canvas, 37" x 31"
collection of Dr. and Mrs. Peter Broido



Difficult Decisions (1975)
oil on canvas, 72¼" x 50"
collection of Jerry Baso





Rise Sunset (1976)
on canvas, 71 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 72"
lection of Jim Varchmin

Roger Brown, an "adamant" anti-European, is one of the central figures in the Chicago art scene. The vertical layering of space, as it appears, for example, in his "Hi Rise Sunset," is characteristic of Brown and intended to suggest a receding perspective.

The work of Gladys Nilsson suggests a different kind of layering—of spiritual space, perhaps, as she deals with ritual and ceremony. Some have suggested that her watercolors (as with "Turpsickory") remind them of fertility rites.

Turpsickory (1975)
watercolor, 15 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 22 $\frac{1}{8}$ "
collection of Mr. and Mrs. William Hoo

Ed Paschke treats American culture as if it were cult—"tribal" dignitaries, like the boxer of "Blue Street," are calculated to remind the viewer that primitivism is a durable attraction in our time.

The "structures" of Ray Yoshida's work are reminiscent of verbal language gradually transformed into purer abstraction—sometimes as hieroglyphs, as in "Analogies #6," and at other times as forms even further removed from representation.

Art Green is an expert colorist of considerable technical skill. In "Difficult Decisions" the line is articulate and the color genuinely translucent; his painting has been described as "analytical" and "metaphysical."



early in World War II. In search of himself the writer seeks the others out. One brother he finds is a successful and important and pompous fool, the other a criminal in prison, and the sister dead. And this purview includes his own experience as a child, a memory of an orphanage run by the state. Nikolay Goubenko, the director, graduated twice from the State Film Institute, as an actor in 1964, as a director in 1970. He wrote the screenplay which the publicity release defines as "partly autobiographical," and plays a role in the film as well.

Roger Andrieux, a Frenchman, studied acting and produced plays in Paris before he became a film student at UCLA in the United States. Then he wrote and directed six shorts in France, returned to the U.S. to work as an assistant director and then did his first feature, called "Mr. Brown." It won the *Grand Prix du Festival du Jeune Cinema* in Toulon in 1974. "Tender Love," his second feature (and he too is co-author of the screenplay), is the story of the fragile coupling of two adolescents, and the negative effects of the boy's family's traditionalism, unfeeling and manipulative disapproval. Ostensibly his ally, in fact his older brother is also a rat. He's the professional photographer who guarantees his own success by callously selling the pictures of a close friend's fiery immolation in an automobile race crash.

These are six of twenty and, interestingly to me, they share certain things. One is the irony that many of these films are never seen on the regular distribution circuits in this country, and some of them are never released in this country at all. It is true that there are films by foreign directors which are conventionally (and selectively) released here: Bergman, Fellini, Truffaut, and others. (Truffaut, in fact, had a picture at the festival. "The Man Who Loved Women" was, for me, second order Truffaut—which still makes it pretty good.) If, as it's often said, we only see (in the metropolitan areas) the cream of foreign production, the aforementioned are the cream of that cream. But beneath that, and still very rich, are these others—what do we call them, the *half & half*?—and these, outside of festivals, are hardly seen at all.

It almost always seems true that these films also share a concern with

the deeply complex and often ambivalent and paradoxical spatial relations between people and their existence, as opposed to the examination of supposed extra-terrestrial beings and comic book projections of the future, beautifully and meticulously crafted as these might be. Perhaps it's the ambiguity and complexity which makes them unplayable in many of the *nabes* and all of the *ozoners*; certainly it's that which defines them as Art Films. In that theatre a viewer can't just sit and let it happen. Like painting (we don't know this?) or whatever art, it takes mental and emotional effort to penetrate. I enjoy the unity in the whole creation, from script to screen, so I am not surprised that these foreign films mentioned seem to be creations of directors and screen writers combined. Or surprised that the stuff of these films is themselves. Or to see how the autobiographical mask that the artists assume fits still another version of themselves.

The stuff of these films is first the characters who ring true to my experience, and seem so closely and intimately created that as they are me, I am them, and, after that, what happens—the plot. Certainly, out of character's action, a part of the whole, there is violence, bloodshed, and madness. That is the stuff of our time.

And, after that, the craft of the films: the composition, the color, the editing, the result of the experience

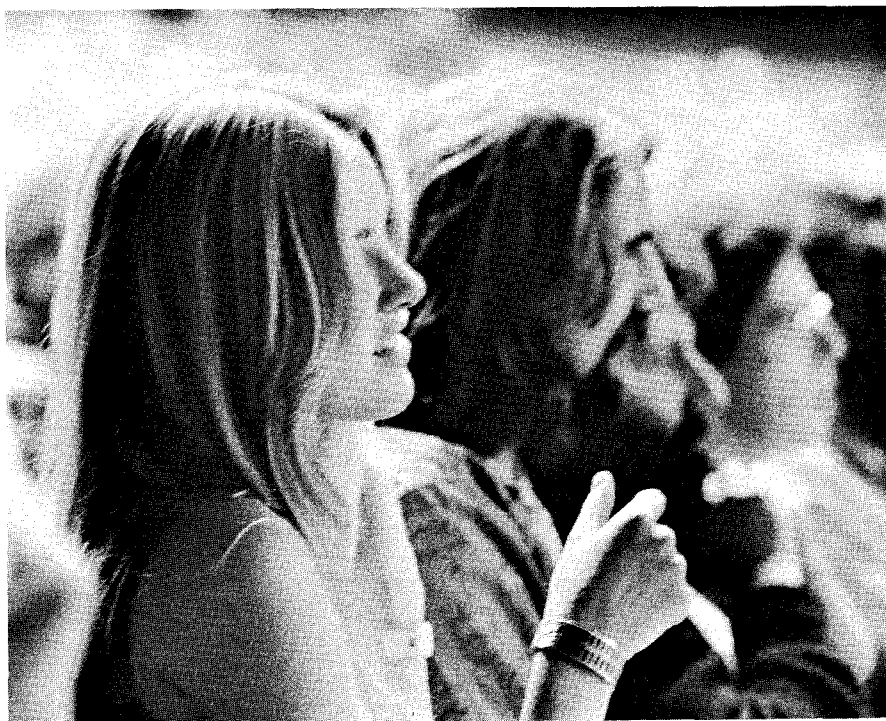
of the director, obviously, with real life. So there's that in common too: these men and women served an apprenticeship, working in others' films, making shorts (there is no market for shorts in the United States—the two Academy Award winners in that category in 1978 were both produced by the Canadian Film Board), and then making a feature. And many of them can make another feature the next year—and the next, developing their technique, having the opportunity to grow in the art.

3

Bring on the clowns . . .

Recently I was in Harrah's Club in South Lake Tahoe, Nevada, not as a gambler. I don't have the money . . . I'm afraid . . . and/or wise. I drop a dollar or two in the nickel and dime slots. I did three bucks worth on the "Wheel of Fortune," and played blackjack, which they say is the most popular gambling game in the U.S. Starting with \$3, I got up to \$8 at one point, and then I lost it all. On the ski lift the next day I rode with a man who is a dealer in one of the casinos, whose mother just retired after a career of dealing, whose father is a pit boss.

"It's a damn fluke, somebody winning—mostly they don't!" He says that, going on about the odds being with the house, and if they weren't big winners would they still



have the doors open? "Haha," he laughs knowingly.

I didn't go to gamble, but watching other people do it fascinates me. The question is, watching the ranks of them at the machines, the crowds around tables, whether the juice is for the possibility of them winning or the probability of them losing. At the Baccarat table in a space sequestered for it—as the style of the game dictates—away from the hustle of the floor, interior columns support glass windows. Inside it's silent; there are lounge seats behind the players; the croupier speaks softly . . . counting the cards. On the felt baize the silent *shoe* slides and I watch a man hand a sheaf of bills across and get ten white chips in return. I stay long enough to see him drop six of them—five minutes. On each one, inscribed in gold, is \$100.

It's a straight transfer of funds. From suckers who are losers looking for Santa Claus to bring them love—security—peace (all symbolized by money) to the pitch-man's pocket. As every action has an equal, opposite reaction. It's exciting. Passing through that enormous room, compartmentalized by all the possible games of chance in the world, at one end I found the massed slots. The roar grows louder. Here and there bells ring. Machine handles are jerked rhythmically and monotonously—sometimes with a ratio of one human to three machines—*THUNK!* Here and there the tinny clatter of tinny U.S. coins. The noise is a roar; I swear they have it wired to a sound system and are playing it back, amplified to suck the suckers in. You should be so lucky to win a million.

"The Hollywood Game Grows Rich—and Desperate" is the title of an article by Leo Janos in the New York Times Sunday edition of February 12th.

Such are the ways of the volatile mostly incomprehensible film industry, which despite scandal, dissension and now a Justice Department investigation into illegal business practices, is basking in the riches of a dramatically lucrative year. So secretive is Hollywood on matters financial that a precise accounting of how lucrative the year was will probably never be revealed. What is known, however, is that Hollywood, as always, is a crap shoot.

And later

Moreover, the business is not only exacerbated by intense pressures to succeed, but also by an almost universal atmosphere of jealousy and ill will directed at those on top.

"This is a town that enjoys its failures even more than its successes." one of Hollywood's leading agents says.

What Leo Janos and many others are talking about is an industry, the major companies of which are parts of conglomerates, the motives of which are certainly profit and not art induced, the product of which has increased its take at the box office in receipts every year for the last three, yet has decreased its own production by (according to *Variety* just this week) 40% so far this year, and so relies more and more on enormously expensive blockbuster films (from the disaster *genre* of several years ago to science fiction and PSI now, and, I think, magic and horror are next to come) with proven bankable stars and proven safe directors, supplementing this with independent and sometimes iconoclastic films which they purchase after the fact, thus avoiding the risk of investing in their production.

The film industry has never been known for its stability, but now it's become the world's greatest roulette game with movies instead of chips. Is it any wonder that movies now should seem less important for being what they are than for what they might win for the player?

So said Vincent Canby, also in the New York Times, in November of 1977. Take "Star Wars" for instance. The picture cost 12 million, give or take, and even that is abstract to me. To date its box office is 215 million and its film rentals something around 80 million less—near 137 million. (Understand the distinction between the two: it's the film rentals that count for the producers and distribution company—Fox in this case. That's after the distribution costs are

paid.) George Lucas who wrote and directed the picture has 50% of that, something in the neighborhood of 68 million dollars. That's a crap shoot!

I have a fish tank in which swim five relatively benign small red and pink tropical fish. The tank makes a pleasant sound, the bubbles coming from the filter pipes, the small hum of the "mighty midget" pump. With its own light, the speckled gravel, waving green weed, red and brown rocks, it is hypnotic to stare into it. It's like another world; it *is* another world. And in there these fish sometimes gang up on each other. I remember a salt water wild tank a friend of mine kept in his house near an ocean beach. In that, among the crabs and blow-fish and whatever else, it was definitely devil take the hindmost. Root hog or die! There were fish who were the eaters and fish who were eaten.

Francis Ford Coppola is one of the biggest. A behemoth of the business, he sits on top of "Apocalypse Now," suppose to be released in the spring of 1979, said to cost somewhere in the neighborhood of 30 million. He uses the old fish tank analogy in an interview in *Playboy*, saying he would rather be the fish that eats.

4

. . . no national leadership, no unity within itself, founded on deceit, built on treachery, survives in a kind of collective happenstance: 'we happened to get a script that happened to grab Redford'"

And, in spite of that truth of that anonymous quote, good pictures get made in wonderland. Paul Shrader (the writer of "Taxi Driver" and "Rolling Thunder") was in San Fran-



cisco directing some sequences for his second picture, "Hard Core." The first picture he directed, "Blue Collar," is just being released. On both of them he is also author of the screenplay.

In an interview printed in the local Sunday paper he talked of his Calvinistic upbringing in the middle west. Once he wanted to be a minister, and then went to film school at UCLA. Up to that everything figures, and now he's still lecturing on sin—getting into it with both feet. I remember my revolt at the blood bath at the end of "Taxi Driver." And in "Rolling Thunder" there's a scene where the bad guys put a man's arm into a kitchen sink disposal. Better that the author write out his fantasies than perform them for sure. "Hard Core" is described as being about the search of a middle western father (a minister?) for his daughter who has run away and become a pornographic film star. Transposed, it might be Paul Shrader's father in search of him.

My first impression of "Blue Collar" was not good; the plot and the characters, I thought, were rigidly manipulated for the linear lesson of the film. But it did have a good look, and the actors (Harvey Keitel, Richard Pryor, Yaphet Kotto) were excellent, the place of the film—automobile workers' milieu—was very real. Still, everything was arranged so neatly.

Then, after reading what he said in the interview, I began to have second thoughts. His words sounded serious; he felt himself to have something to say; certainly there was a message (withal too obviously conveyed) in "Blue Collar." And compared to excesses of those he had written, the film he directed becomes more real, and what it shows of the underbelly of this country could well stand being seen.

And "Straight Time"—with Dustin Hoffman—was directed by Ulu Grosbard, a man I have known for many years. Out of some kind of industry fear, paranoia, the inability of the chiefs of Warner Brothers to stand behind what they claimed to see as a fine film, they first started to throw it away in distribution which, for one, means spending no money for advertising. And two, you don't need so many prints because there won't be that many theatres. In San Francisco, for instance, they didn't have a press

preview. And the reviews in the industry trade papers were not good, but then, in *Variety* at least, the review of "Bobby Deerfield" was excellent—so what does that prove?

Across the country, however, out of 35 critics in major news media, 34 were excellent. And last week in *Variety* there was a double page spread (which ain't cheap!) quoting from them: "... gritty, honest ... uncommonly interesting ... riveting ... a revelation" I suspect that Warners has changed its mind, but, according to some who supposedly know, it's already too late. Not to go in with trumpets up front is the kiss of death, and after that there's naught but the cold of the grave.

In which case "Straight Time" may not be widely released and that would be a terrible shame. This is an American picture of a small segment of the world population that is crazy, the psychotic criminal who continues his compulsion in spite of his own realization that inevitably he will be caught. For a loser the pay-off is in getting caught, but there's a lot of juice in getting there. Dustin Hoffman plays this character of punk second-rate murderous thief perfectly. And contrary to an impression of a world of split second timing and careful planning, gleaned from most cops and robbers movies, the world in this film is an obverse image of that. Chaos—it is the chaos of our time—a microcosm. (In it, incidentally, is the currently growing-in-popularity robbery genre—the smash and grab—suggested by the LA Police Department. Since everything today is wired up the walls with alarms, and lights flash in all the police dispatch offices to tell them when one is going off, still it takes a certain amount of time for them to respond. So you jump in and smash the glass and grab everything you can get out in the minutes that it takes the police to come.)

If the point-of-view (POV) of "Straight Time" is narrow, as was that of "Blue Collar," this focus on segments of populations is a good antidote to the compelling media image presented on television commercials or that flat composite that Jimmy Carter always seems to be addressing. There is no such composite modern man, I suspect, so the films (and other arts) which present us with the real details of the various individuals of the sub-groups that share it all with

us are valuable. Or perhaps the force is towards too many composite men after all, and contrariwise, the picture of the individual teaches us to hang on, to watch out and protect both the specialities and the peculiarities in ourselves.

So, like the films from the festival, these products of the American industry are both unusual and worthy of celebration. For the dedicated film goers of a festival, these pictures should be seen. Which brings me to the last, Paul Mazursky's "An Unmarried Woman."

With what one writer wrote, that Claude Goretta's "Lacemaker" was suffocated by its concern with the detail of real people—what and how they eat, as well as what's on the bedside table and on top of the toilet—I disagree entirely. Both the general and the particular. Detail is an essence of it. It is hard to conceive of too much (and I don't mean laundry lists), for that is the intimacy of character that we recognize in us. And that is what makes the people played by Jill Clayburgh and Alan Bates in Mazursky's film so particular and so real.

Not surprisingly, Mazursky is the writer too, and this picture too is a familiar kind, the woman abandoned by the husband after a decade and a half—he's going to something young who stood next to him in Bloomingdale's. For the wife the experience shatters her to the bed-rock of her soul. And, for a time, it appears there are cracks there too. Mazursky's POV is trivial (with the meaning of commonplace and ordinary), what is *significant* for most of us, the daily round that we are immersed in. So then that this woman *can* learn to cope, to find out what she had lost—almost inadvertently—is the process of her life, and to build back (along with the ministrations of the almost perfect Mr. Bates), is the existential possibility we all should see.

Having found him and loved him (and he her), when he invites her for summer in Vermont she refuses. The independence she has just built needs the summer test, and the final montage of scenes in the picture are a metaphor for that test. If it appears to end ambiguously, still you saw her start in Soho, downtown in New York, and the last vision is of her Uptown. She's come a long way and that is one for humanism—a quiet triumph, not a strident shout. □

**Iowa School of Letters
announces the 1979 \$1,000**

award for short fiction

**in cooperation with the Iowa Arts Council, Writers
Workshop, and University of Iowa Press**

Eligibility

Any writer who has not previously published a volume of prose fiction is eligible to enter the competition. Revised manuscripts which have been previously entered may be resubmitted. Writers who have published a volume of poetry are eligible also.

Previous Years

The Award was established in 1969 to encourage writing in a typically American literary genre. Each year over 200 manuscripts are entered in the Short Fiction Award competition. Preliminary professional readings are organized by the Writers Workshop, and the final judgment is made by a prominent writer or critic.

Prize

The winning author will receive a \$1,000 cash award provided by the Iowa Arts Council. The manuscript will be published by the University of Iowa Press.

Manuscript

The manuscript must be a collection of short stories of at least 150 typewritten pages. Stories previously published in periodicals are eligible for inclusion. Xeroxed copies are acceptable. Stamped, self-addressed return packaging must accompany the manuscript. Please do not send cash, checks, or money orders. Reasonable care is taken, but we are not responsible for loss of manuscripts in the mails or for the return of those not accompanied by a stamped envelope. We assume the author retains a copy of the manuscript.

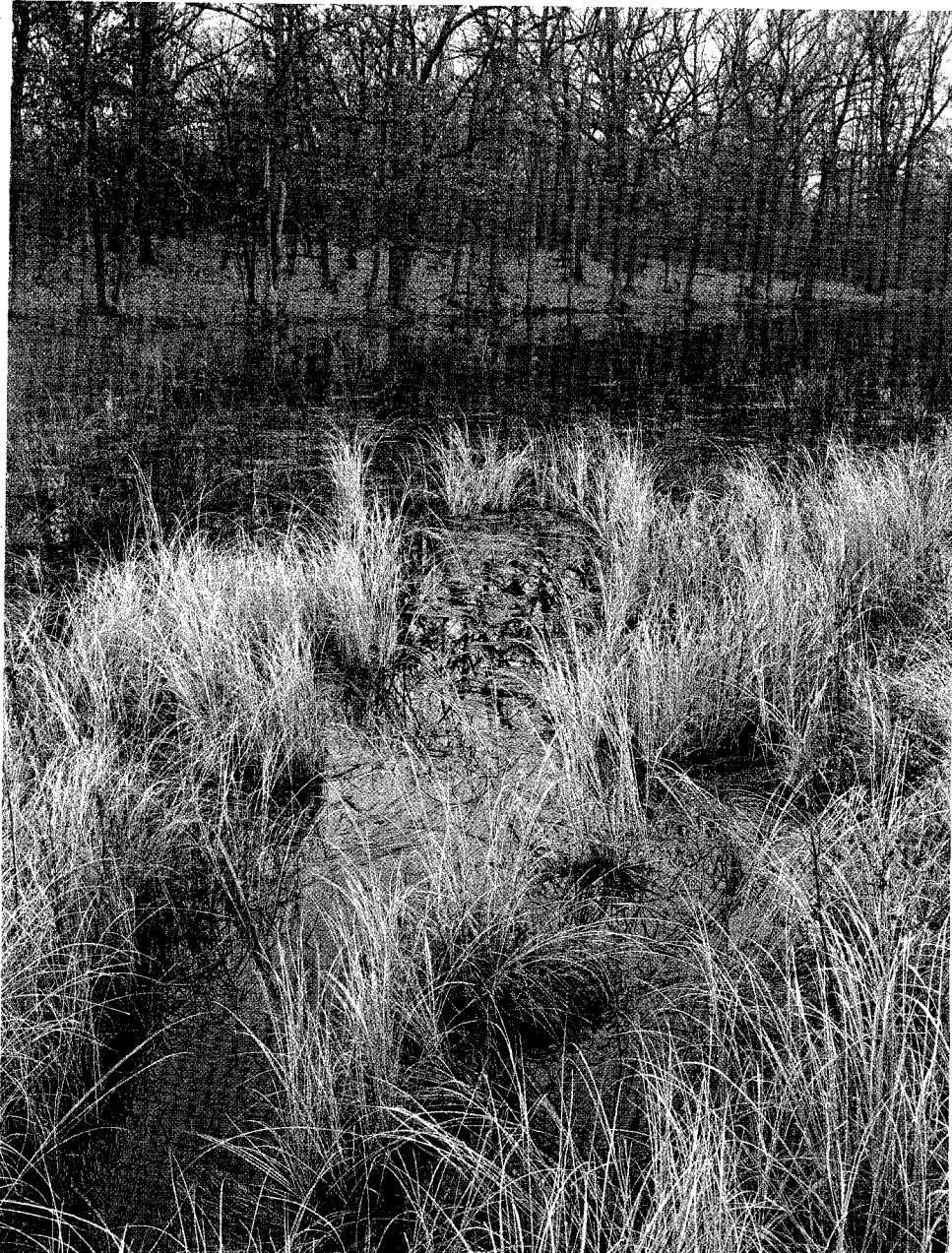
Submission

Manuscripts should be mailed to:

**Iowa School of Letters Award for Short Fiction
Department of English
English-Philosophy Building
The University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa 52242**

No application forms are necessary. Entries for the 1979 competition should be submitted between August 1, 1978, and September 30, 1978. Announcement of the winner will be made early in 1979.

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Carl Kurtz

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